



Transcendental Philosophy and its Transformations

Heidegger and Nishida's critical engagements with transcendental philosophy in the late 1920s

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**Transcendental Philosophy and its Transformations:
Heidegger and Nishida's critical engagements with
transcendental philosophy in the late 1920s**

A PhD thesis

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University of Copenhagen

by

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English Abstract

Most comparative studies of Heidegger and Nishida have focused on comparing and contrasting Nishida's philosophy with later Heidegger's thought. This is not surprising since, of all Western philosophers, Nishida probably resonates most with the later Heidegger after the "turn" (*Kehre*). *But is there also a common ground between Nishida and early, pre-turn Heidegger?* The present work attempts to shed light on this question by uncovering their earlier critical engagements with transcendental philosophy during the late 1920s. More specifically, it aims to articulate the extent to which they still work within a traditional transcendental framework and the ways in which they attempt to go beyond this in their transformations of transcendental philosophy. For Heidegger, my focus is his project in *Being and Time* (1927). For Nishida, I focus on his theory of *basho* as developed in two of his works from the late 1920s, *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927) and *The Self-aware System of Universals* (1930). My aim is to show the ways in which Heidegger's *hermeneutic transformation* and Nishida's *chorological transformation* of transcendental philosophy resemble and differ from each other.

I begin by clarifying the essence of the "traditional transcendental framework." From an examination of Kant and Husserl, I draw three criteria of transcendental philosophy: (1) transcendental philosophy is a search for the *foundation* of our experience and knowledge, (2) it employs *transcendental reflection*, and (3) it entails an *alteration of our relation to the world* from the naive realist view of the world as existing independently of us to seeing the world as existing only insofar as it is constituted by transcendental subjectivity. Taking these criteria as a heuristic device, I then question the extent to which both Heidegger and Nishida work within a traditional transcendental framework and the extent to which they attempt to go beyond it.

Firstly, I argue that they both saw the importance of seeking a kind of transcendental foundation. But while Dasein is still a kind of transcendental subjectivity that "constitutes" the world in the sense that it is world-disclosing, I argue that absolute nothingness is no "subjectivity" that "constitutes" objects since there is absolutely no-thing that can be said to constitute objects. *Secondly*, while they both seek a transcendental ground through transcendental reflection, they also render it a matter of disclosing and awakening to one's factual situation. Yet, unlike Heidegger, for Nishida, transcendental reflection must begin with our facticity and historicity but it must not end there. It must delve deeper and reveal the absolute no-thingness of our being. *Thirdly*, for both thinkers, transcendental philosophy essentially alters the naive realist view of the world. For Heidegger, we come to see the world through transcendental subjectivity (Dasein), one whose ontological constitution is articulated as disclosedness to the world, factual, and is always already projecting its possibilities upon the world. In other words, we come to see the world through Dasein's being-in-the-world. For Nishida, however, we come to see the world *through absolute no-thingness*. This is not at all equivalent to saying that we come to see the world *as absolutely nothing* as if to imply a nihilistic position. Rather, we come to the self-realization that "I" am the place of absolute no-thingness wherein "reality" realizes itself. In this way, I argue that, while having much in common, Nishida's chorological transformation is more radical than Heidegger's hermeneutic one. Ultimately, the radicalness of Nishida's transformation lies in its enigma, namely that transcendental *reflection* brings us back in touch with the *non-reflective* experience prior to the subject-object split.

Danish Abstract

De fleste comparative studier om Heidegger og Nishida har fokuseret på sammenfald og forskelle mellem Nishidas filosofi og den sene Heideggers tænkning. Dette er ikke overraskende da Nishida, blandt alle vestlige filosoffer, nok minder mest om den sene Heidegger efter dennes "vending" (*Kehre*). *Men kan der også findes ligheder mellem Nishida og den tidlige Heidegger, altså før sidstnævntes "Kehre"?* Denne afhandling forsøger at belyse dette spørgsmål ved at fremstille deres tidligere arbejder med transcendentale filosofi i slutningen af 1920'erne. Mere nøjagtigt forsøger afhandlingen at beskrive i hvilken grad de to kan siges stadigvæk at arbejde indenfor en traditionel transcendentale forståelsesramme og endvidere måderne, på hvilke de forsøger at bryde ud af den gennem deres transformationer af transcendentalfilosofien. I Heideggers tilfælde fokuserer jeg på hovedværket *Væren og Tid* (1927). I Nishidas tilfælde fokuserer jeg på hans teori om *basho* som udviklet i to af hans værker fra de sene 20'ere, *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927) og *The Self-aware System of Universals* (1930). Det er mit mål at vise, på hvilke måder Heideggers *hermeneutiske transformation* og Nishidas "korologiske" *transformation* af den transcendentale filosofi ligner og adskiller sig fra hinanden.

Jeg begynder med en afklaring af essensen af den "traditionelle transcendentale forståelsesramme." Gennem en undersøgelse af Kant og Husserl opridser jeg tre kriterier for transcendentale filosofi: (1) transcendentale filosofi er en søgen efter *grundlaget* for vor erfaring og viden, (2) den anvender *transcendental reflektion*, og (3) den leder til en *forandring af vores forhold til verden* fra den naive realismes overbevisning ifølge hvilken verden ansues som eksisterende uafhængigt af os, til at den ses som eksisterende kun såfremt den er konstitueret af en transcendentale subjektivitet. Med udgangspunkt i disse kriterier spørger jeg, i hvilken grad Heidegger og Nishida kan siges at arbejde indenfor en traditionel transcendentale forståelsesramme, og i hvilken grad de forsøger at bryde ud af den.

For det første argumenterer jeg for at de begge så vigtigheden af at lede efter et slags transcendentalt grundlag. Men hvor *Dasein* stadigvæk forbliver en art transcendentale subjektivitet der "konstituerer" verden, forstået som verdensafdækkende, argumenterer jeg for at den absolutte intethed ikke er en "subjektivitet" der "konstituerer" objekter, fordi der er absolut ingen-ting, der kan siges at konstituere objekter. *For det andet*, almindeligvis de begge leder efter et transcendentalt grundlag gennem transcendentale refleksion, gør de det også til et spørgsmål om at afdække og opvågne til ens faktiske situation. For Nishida, ulig Heidegger, må den transcendentale refleksion begynde med vores fakticitet og historicitet, men den kan ikke ende der. Den må dykke dybere og afsløre vores værens absolutte intethed. *For det tredje*, ifølge begge tænkere ændrer transcendentale filosofi fundamentalt den naive realismes verdensbillede. Ifølge Heidegger begynder vi at se verden gennem den transcendentale subjektivitet (*Dasein*), hvis ontologiske konstitution artikuleres som verdensafdækkende, faktisk og som altid allerede udkastende sine muligheder i verden. Med andre ord, begynder vi at se verden gennem *Daseins* væren-i-verden. Men ifølge Nishida begynder vi at se verden *gennem den absolutte intethed*. Dette er overhovedet ikke det samme som at sige, at vi begynder at se verden som *absolut intet*, altså som en form for nihilistisk position. Snarere opnår vi den indsigt, at "jeg" er den absolutte intetheds sted, i hvilken "virkeligheden" realiserer sig selv. På denne vis argumenterer jeg for, at selvom de har meget til fælles, så er Nishidas korologiske transformation mere radikal end Heideggers hermeneutiske. Alt i alt skal radikaliteten af Nishidas transformation findes i dens gåde, nemlig at den transcendentale *refleksion* tager os tilbage til den *ikke-refleksive* oplevelse, der eksisterer før subjekt-objekt skellet.

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Abbreviations

Works by Martin Heidegger

All works by Heidegger are cited from the *Gesamtausgabe* (abbreviated as “GA”) except for *Sein und Zeit*, where I cite from the standard Max Niemeyer edition. The abbreviation is followed by volume and page number. In the text, I have given the pagination from the original German first followed by a slash and pagination from the English translation, wherever available. I have followed the available English translations in my citations. Full information about the works is given in the Bibliography.

GA 10	<i>Der Satz vom Grund</i>
GA 20	<i>Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs</i>
GA 24	<i>Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie</i>
GA 26	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz</i>
GA 41	<i>Die Frage nach dem Ding: Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen</i> (Wintersemester 1935–1936)
GA 56/57	<i>Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie: 1. Die Idee der Philosophie und das</i> <i>Weltanschauungsproblem</i>
GA 63	<i>Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)</i>
GA 65	<i>Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis) (1936–1938).</i>
SZ	<i>Sein und Zeit</i>

Works by Nishida Kitarō

All works by Nishida are cited from the *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* [Complete Works of Nishida Kitarō] (abbreviated as “NKZ”). The abbreviation is followed by volume and page number. In the text, I have given the pagination from the original Japanese first followed by a slash and pagination from the English translation, wherever available. I have often revised the available English translations in my citations for the purpose of literal precision. When the English translations were not available, I have translated the passages myself. Full information about the works is given in the Bibliography.

NKZ 1	<i>Zen no kenkyū</i> [An Inquiry into the Good], <i>Shisaku to taiken</i> [Thought and Experience]
NKZ 2	<i>Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei</i> [Intuition and Reflection in Self-awareness]

- NKZ 4 *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e* [From the Acting to the Seeing]
- NKZ 5 *Ippansha no jikakuteki taikei* [The Self-aware System of Universals]
- NKZ 7 *Tetsugaku no konpon mondai zokuhen (benshōhōteki sekai)* [Fundamental Problems of
Philosophy Continued (The Dialectical World)].
- NKZ 8 *Tetsugaku ronbunshū daini* [Philosophical Essays, Vol. 2]
- NKZ 10 *Tetsugaku ronbunshū daiyon* [Philosophical Essays, Vol. 4]
- NKZ 11 *Tetsugaku ronbunshū dairoku* [Philosophical Essays, Vol. 6]
- NKZ 12 *Zoku shisaku to taiken* [Sequel to Thought and Experience]
- NKZ 13 *Shōhen to nōto* [Short Writings and Notes]
- NKZ 16 *Shoki sōkō* [Early Writings]
- NKZ 18 *Shokanshū* [Collection of Letters]

Square brackets (“[...]”) within quotations indicate additions or changes made by me, and oftentimes the original German or Japanese phrase. Angle brackets (“<...>”) indicate additions and changes made by the by the English translator.

Introduction

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) are two of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. While coming from very different cultural and intellectual backgrounds, they both took up the task of overcoming the Western metaphysical tradition. Compared to Heidegger, Nishida has yet to gain acknowledgment in the academic world. Sadly enough, his philosophy has not even gained the acknowledgement it deserves within Japan, where it originated. One reason for this neglect is the difficulty of understanding Nishida's philosophy. If Heidegger is difficult to read, Nishida is almost incomprehensible for many, even in Japanese.¹ But one should not take this as a sign that Nishida was confused. As Ueda Shizuteru² states in "The Difficulties of Reading Nishida," the difficulty is a reflection of the difficult project Nishida set for himself.³ Not unlike Heidegger, in order to break with the Western metaphysical tradition, Nishida felt the need to create his own language. But what makes Nishida's language particularly difficult is the fact that his thinking developed between the two very different traditions of the East and West. On the one hand, he was firmly rooted in the Eastern Buddhist tradition and especially in Zen Buddhism where the practice of "non-thinking" is said to be the key to understanding reality. On the other hand, he was "philosophizing" in the sense of engaging in the reflective practice of philosophy carried out in the Western philosophical tradition. As Ueda nicely puts it, Nishida was a Zen practitioner philosophizing and, at the same time, a philosopher practicing Zen.⁴ He also notes that such an attempt to think between the two poles is comparable to later Heidegger's attempt to think the relationship between the two very different ways of saying, "thinking" (*Denken*) and "poetizing" (*Dichten*).⁵ Indeed, of all Western philosophers, Nishida probably resonates most with the later Heidegger after the "turn" (*Kehre*).

It is not surprising, then, that most comparative studies of Heidegger and Nishida have focused on comparing and contrasting Nishida's philosophy with later Heidegger's thought.⁶ For example, Ōhashi Ryōsuke has argued that the later Heidegger's idea of "Dasein" as the place of the "event" or "happening"

¹ Kobayashi Hideo, a Japanese literary critic, famously criticized Nishida's writings in 1939, saying that although they are of course not written in a foreign language, they are also not written in Japanese (1968, p. 84).

² All Japanese names in this work (except in the bibliography) are written in the Japanese order of family name, followed by given name.

³ Ueda 1994, pp. 231-241.

⁴ Ibid., p. 194.

⁵ Ibid., p. 235.

⁶ Admittedly, most of the comparative studies have been attempted by Nishida scholars and not by Heidegger scholars. This fact also shows that Nishida has yet to gain acknowledgment outside the circle of scholars working within Japanese philosophy.

(*Ereignis*) of being itself is comparable to Nishida's idea of "the self-determination of the world" (*sekai no jikogentei*) developed from the mid-1930s.⁷ More recently, John Krummel has compared the "quasi-religious" language that both employ in discussing the "original wherein" of human existence. On the one hand, from the 1930s onwards, Heidegger speaks of "the sacred" that clears space for beings to appear. On the other hand, in the 1940s, Nishida comes to relate this place, what he calls "the place of absolute nothingness," to the "absolute" (*zettai*) or "god" that envelops the world as its place through its own "kenotic self-negation."⁸ Others have also noted the affinity between Heidegger's notions of "clearing" (*Lichtung*) or "openness" (*Offenheit*) and Nishida's idea of the "place of nothingness" (*mu no basho*).⁹ It is worth noting that most of these studies also focus on the later period of Nishida's thought, from the 1930s onwards.

But can we also find common ground between Nishida and early, pre-turn Heidegger? Ōhashi seems to answer in the affirmative, noting that Nishida's thought took a similar turn to Heidegger's. For Ōhashi, the significance of Nishida's philosophy in the history of philosophy is to be found in his "*bashoronteki tenkai*," or "turn to *basho*."¹⁰ According to Ōhashi, this was a turn from "seeing the world from the self," which included Nishida's earlier position, to "seeing the world from the world," developed in the mid-1930s. Indeed in 1934, Nishida writes that his earlier work, *The Self-aware Determination of Nothingness* of 1932, "still remained in the standpoint of seeing the world from the individual self."¹¹ Thus, just as Heidegger later turned away from "Dasein" as the place of the *human understanding* of being, Nishida also turned away from "seeing the world from *the individual self*." Heidegger later expressly stated that this

⁷ Cf. Ōhashi 1995, chapter 2 ("*Nishida to Heidegger*" [Nishida and Heidegger]).

⁸ Krummel 2010.

⁹ See for example: Andrew Feenberg (1999) and Elmar Weinmayr (2005). For a concise yet comprehensive overview of the comparative studies until now, see: Krummel (2010, note 4).

¹⁰ It is not easy to translate what Ōhashi calls "*bashoronteki tenkai*." The issue concerns, on the one hand, how one should translate Nishida's "*basho*" and, on the other hand, how one should interpret Ōhashi's understanding of Nishida's *basho*. As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, "*basho*" in Japanese literally means "place." In this work, I have sometimes translated "*basho*" as place and other times kept the original, when I felt that it was better to emphasize that it is Nishida's specific term. Some commentators writing in English have rendered the term as "topos" (e.g. Yusa (1986 & 1987), Baek (2008), and Maraldo (2015)). Accordingly, we might translate Ōhashi's "*bashoronteki tenkai*" to "topological turn." However, Krummel has pointed out that the meaning of Nishida's "*basho*" is closer to Plato's "chōra" than to "topos." According to Krummel, "for the ancient Greeks, topos is the physical location that a material thing happens to occupy at the moment and that is independent of its being. Chōra, on the other hand, is the field that gives room for such localities and provides the contextual significance for things" (2015, p. 203). If we follow his interpretation, which I am sympathetic to and which I believe Ōhashi would be also, we might render his "*bashoronteki tenkai*" as "chorological turn." But for the sake of simplicity, I have here given a simple rendering as "turn to *basho*."

¹¹ NKZ 7, p. 210. The quotation is taken from the preface to *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy Continued (The Dialectical World)* published in 1934.

turn was a turning away from transcendental thinking.¹² While Nishida himself does not make such statement, the same could be said of his turn. For both Heidegger and Nishida, then, the turn in their thinking seems to have been related to the engagement with the transcendental tradition.

The present study goes in the same direction as Ōhashi's in the sense of opening up the common ground between Heidegger and Nishida. But instead of comparing the nature of the "turn" in their thought, I focus on their early, "pre-turn" period.¹³ I attempt to shed light on this further common ground between Heidegger and Nishida by uncovering *their earlier critical engagements with transcendental philosophy*. In recent years, Heidegger scholars have begun to speak of the "transcendental Heidegger."¹⁴ It has come to be recognized that, at least during the Marburg period (1923-1928), Heidegger was still largely working within the framework of transcendental philosophy. Thus, though there is yet to be a consensus on this matter, it is nowadays less controversial to read *Being and Time* (1927) as an attempt to critically appropriate transcendental philosophy. Yet, "transcendental Nishida" is still an undeveloped idea in Nishida scholarship. On the one hand, it is widely acknowledged that early Nishida critically engaged with neo-Kantianism and Fichte as well as Hegel and Kant. On the other hand, however, the extent to which Nishida's ideas of *jikaku* and *basho*, both developed in the period of this engagement, are continuous with the transcendental tradition is still a matter awaiting clarification.

Accordingly, in this work, I propose to articulate Heidegger and Nishida's critical engagements with transcendental philosophy during the late 1920s. More specifically, I aim to articulate the extent to which they still work within a traditional transcendental framework and the ways in which they attempt to go beyond this in their transformations of transcendental philosophy. For Heidegger, my focus is his project in *Being and Time*. For Nishida, I focus on his early theory of *basho* as it was developed in two of his works from the late 1920s, *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927) and *The Self-aware System of*

¹² Cf. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*, §§132-134 (GA 65, pp. 250-254).

¹³ In fact, it is controversial whether such a "turn" really exists in Nishida's thought. On the one hand, there can be no denying that, in the 1930s and '40s, as his concern moves away from epistemological problems towards the socio-historical world, Nishida comes to revise his earlier views. And it is true that his statement in 1934 points to an important change in his thinking. On the other hand, however, whether this change amounts to a "turn" comparable to Heidegger's *Kehre* as Ōhashi suggests is somewhat questionable. It seems to me that Nishida's "topological turn" took place already in the late 1920s. Perhaps it was only later that he came to fully appreciate the nature of this turn as "seeing the world from the world." Nonetheless, I would submit that a revolutionary "topological turn" (or chorological turn) takes place in the late 1920s that was then further developed in the 1930s and '40s. But I will not be concerned with this issue in this work.

¹⁴ The collective effort to bring attention to the topic goes back to a conference, "Heidegger and Transcendental Philosophy," held at Rice University in 2003. The manuscripts from the conference were then compiled in a book under the title, *Transcendental Heidegger* (2007), co-edited by Jeff Malpas and Steven Crowell. This volume has greatly contributed to the acknowledgment of the significance of the transcendental in Heidegger's thought.

Universals (1930).¹⁵ By comparing and contrasting their engagements, I attempt to shed light on the ways in which their transformations of transcendental philosophy resemble and differ from each other.

But at this point we must clarify why examining this period of their thought is worth our time. After all, one may wonder, didn't both of them come to see the limits of their earlier approach? To begin with, both Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* and Nishida's theory of *basho* in the late 1920s are important, at the very least, for understanding the trajectory of their thought. But apart from that, they are also significant for understanding the possibilities, as well as possible limitations, of transcendental philosophy itself. For, as I will be arguing, both Heidegger and Nishida attempt to transform traditional forms of transcendental philosophy in important respects. Thus, their critical engagements with transcendental philosophy reflect their attempts to overcome the Western metaphysical tradition by still working within *but also going beyond* the traditional transcendental framework. In this way, at least during this period, both thinkers believed in the *possibilities* of transcendental philosophy, namely that it *could* clear the way towards overcoming the Western metaphysical tradition, if it were transformed. Therefore, if the later period of their thought sheds light on the possible limitations of transcendental philosophy, the earlier period goes some way towards illuminating its possibilities. Since the present work focuses only on the earlier period, the possible limitations of transcendental philosophy will not be thematized.

Before turning to an outline of the work, I will discuss its approach. When one engages in comparative philosophy that attempts to articulate a non-Western tradition in light of some Western philosophical concept, one must be especially careful not to make the fatal error of "recreating the other tradition in the image of one's own," as Littlejohn writes in the entry on "Comparative Philosophy" in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.¹⁶ This error is based on the chauvinistic assumption that the other tradition is just doing the same or similar thing as "we" are doing, thus failing to understand the other for its own sake. Now, one may suspect that I am in danger of doing this by interpreting Nishida as a transcendental philosopher, which is certainly a Western concept. However, such a worry can be immediately dismissed since it simply fails to see what John Krummel calls the "eclectic nature" of Nishida's philosophy.¹⁷ Namely, one of the characteristic features of Nishida's philosophy is that it developed out of critical appropriations of ideas from various sources, not only from the Eastern Buddhist

¹⁵ Though this book was published in 1930, it is a collection of essays published between 1928 and 1929.

¹⁶ Littlejohn: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/comparat/#SH3a> (accessed August 15, 2016).

¹⁷ Krummel 2015, p. 4.

tradition but, in fact, especially from the Western philosophical tradition.¹⁸ Thus, we find Nishida borrowing terms such as “pure experience” (William James), “a priori” (Kant and neo-Kantians)¹⁹, “noesis-noema” (Husserl), while employing them in a rather peculiar manner for the purpose of articulating his own position. Nishida’s critical engagement with transcendental philosophy is also part of this eclectic nature of his philosophy. Therefore, my attempt to articulate the “transcendental Nishida” is in essence no different from articulating the “transcendental Heidegger.” At the same time, however, it is also important to note that I have no intention of claiming that Nishida and Heidegger alike were *only* working within the bounds of a traditional transcendental framework. It is my aim to articulate their *critical* (this is the crucial word) engagements with transcendental philosophy. Accordingly, the present work takes its departure from the understanding that, in their critical engagements during the late 1920s, both Heidegger and Nishida work within but also attempt to go beyond the traditional transcendental framework through a kind of transformation. The study therefore begins with a clarification of the “traditional transcendental framework.”

This work is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a preliminary study of Kant and Husserl’s transcendental philosophies (Chapters 1 and 2); the second part deals with Heidegger’s critical engagement with transcendental philosophy (Chapters 3 and 4); and the third part examines Nishida’s critical engagement thereof in comparison with Heidegger’s (Chapters 5 and 6). I assume that most of my readers are less acquainted with Nishida’s thought than with Heidegger’s. Thus, I first present Heidegger and then Nishida, making references to Heidegger’s ideas where the association may be helpful to the reader. The main comparative part of the study is undertaken in Chapter 6.

In Part I, I pose the question, *what is transcendental philosophy?* In Chapter 1, I examine two cases of transcendental philosophy: Kant’s transcendental philosophy and Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. In Chapter 2, I work out the essence of transcendental philosophy based on the investigations in Chapter 1. I choose Kant and Husserl not only because they are representatives of the tradition but also because they are two key figures that both Heidegger and Nishida engaged with. In Chapter 1, I argue that Kant’s contribution lies in introducing a new question to the problem of knowledge (“How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?”) and seeking the answer through transcendental

¹⁸ See also, Davis (2013 and 2014).

¹⁹ See my article, “*Nishida ni okeru ‘a priori’ gainen*” [Nishida on the “a priori” concept] (2015b). There, I analyzed Nishida’s appropriation or reinterpretation of “a priori” during the period from 1916 to 1926, when the term was most employed. I argued that he reinterprets the (neo-)Kantian a priori as the unifying constitutive principle of our various kinds of experience, which is not merely posited as the conditions of possibility for our experience, but, also, given in our intuitive experience.

reflection, namely a second-order reflection into the a priori subjective conditions of possibility of our knowledge of objects. I then identify Husserl's main differences from Kant in his insistence on the phenomenological method, which is characterized by the phenomenological reduction, its descriptive nature and its appeal to intuitive evidence. I further articulate the specific sense in which Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological method is reflective. I argue that, for Husserl, the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction are the specific methods that together constitute transcendental reflection.

In Chapter 2, I draw out three criteria of transcendental philosophy based on the investigations in Chapter 1. (1) Transcendental philosophy is a search for the *foundation* of our experience and knowledge. Transcendental foundationalism differs from other kinds of foundationalism in that the foundational relation is understood in terms of transcendental priority, i.e. transcendental subjectivity has priority over the world in the sense that it constitutes the latter's meaning. (2) It employs *transcendental reflection*. Transcendental reflection is a second-order reflection that does not thematize objects straightforwardly to determine their real properties but, rather, thematizes the conditions of possibility for our experience of objects. (3) It entails an *alteration of our relation to the world*. One of the important metaphysical implications of transcendental philosophy is that it awakens us from the naive realist view of the world as existing independently of us to seeing the world as existing only insofar as it is constituted by transcendental subjectivity.

Parts II and III deal with Heidegger and Nishida's critical engagements with transcendental philosophy respectively. The three criteria are employed as a heuristic device to determine the extent to which they work within a traditional transcendental framework and the ways in which they attempt to go beyond it.

In Part II, I first articulate Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* (Chapter 3) and then examine his critical engagement with transcendental philosophy (Chapter 4). I argue that the proposed project in *Being and Time* is to clarify the meaning of being in general (i.e. the task of fundamental ontology) by way of first undertaking a hermeneutic phenomenology of the existential analytic of Dasein. In Chapter 4, I begin by examining the transcendental orientation of *Being and Time* in light of the three criteria. I argue that Heidegger's project is transcendental insofar as: (1) it is foundational in the sense that Dasein has transcendental priority over the world, (2) it employs transcendental reflection to disclose the conditions of possibility for our experience, and (3) it brings about an alteration of our relation to the world from the naive-realist view to an understanding that world-disclosure depends on Dasein's being. I end by drawing out Heidegger's *hermeneutic transformation* of transcendental philosophy to see the ways in which he

attempted to go beyond a traditional transcendental framework. I argue that the core of this transformation lies in the radicalness of hermeneutic reflection.

In Part III, I present an outline of Nishida's early theory of *basho* (Chapter 5) and examine his critical engagement with transcendental philosophy (Chapter 6). I argue that Nishida's early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s was an attempt to provide a theory of knowledge that avoids various sorts of subjectivism. He sought to secure the objective validity of knowledge by showing that our knowledge of objects ultimately presupposes the place of absolute nothingness, i.e. by grounding our knowledge of objects in the experience of "transcendent objects," that is, the experience of oneself as absolute nothingness wherein "reality" realizes itself. In Chapter 6, I first examine the transcendental orientation of Nishida's early theory of *basho*. Then, I draw out his *chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy*. (I adopt Krummel's rendering of "*basho*" as "chōra.") While the general structure of this chapter parallels that of Chapter 4, I will here contrast Nishida's position with Heidegger's. I argue that, unlike Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, which still stays close to the core of traditional transcendental philosophy, Nishida's early theory of *basho* radically transforms all three criteria. (1) It is foundational, but only in the weak sense that absolute nothingness is still seen as a transcendental ground. (2) It employs a transcendental reflection that is radically transformed through chorological reflection to disclose the conditions of possibility for our experience. (3) It brings about an *alteration of our relation to the world* from our naive belief in the independent existence of objects and the world, to our direct experience with the world in pure experience, rather than seeing the world through transcendental subjectivity. In the final part, I clarify the ways in which Heidegger's hermeneutic and Nishida's chorological transformations of transcendental philosophy are comparable whilst different in important respects. I argue that, if Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy was ultimately the result of the acknowledgement of the *facticity of our being*, Nishida's chorological transformation of it was the result of the acknowledgement of the *absolute no-thingness of our being*.

In the Conclusion, I recapitulate my findings by asking how their hermeneutic and chorological transformations shed light on the possibilities of transcendental philosophy that may in fact reveal its limitations in later Heidegger and Nishida.

Part I: What is transcendental philosophy?

Chapter 1: Transcendental philosophy in Kant and Husserl

Introduction

Before we can proceed to address the question whether Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* and Nishida's early theory of *basho* is transcendental or not, what is meant by 'transcendental' must first be clarified. Here, however, we are already confronted with a host of difficulties. First of all, we do not have in hand a ready-made definition of the transcendental nor do we have a general agreement as to what transcendental philosophy is. The understanding of what it attempts to do, its essential features, etc. simply diverges amongst philosophers who identify themselves as either working within or without 'transcendental philosophy.' Some historical figures that have identified themselves as transcendental philosophers include Kant, the German idealists (e.g. Fichte, Schelling, Hegel), Neo-Kantians (e.g. Rickert, Cohen) and some phenomenologists (e.g. Husserl). There are also more recent defenders of transcendental philosophy coming from the phenomenological tradition (e.g. J. N. Mohanty, David Carr) as well as the analytic tradition, specifically in the philosophy of science (e.g. Michael Friedman). The above brief list of names alone suffices to show that transcendental philosophy is an umbrella term that covers a wide-range of philosophers coming from various philosophical backgrounds and specifically with very different metaphysical views. Moreover, most of these thinkers would probably not be happy being categorized under the same label with the others in the list. This leads us to the following worry: Is there a common thread that runs throughout such diverse views? Or are these views bound together by family resemblance? In relation to this point, there is the further difficulty: How should we even proceed to pursue the question of whether there is a common thread or if it is a case of family resemblance? Indeed, there is even the possibility that the term is being applied to wholly different phenomena and hence nothing really binds them together. The following investigation, however, proceeds under the conviction that there is in fact an *essence* pertaining to transcendental philosophy. But needless to say, such conviction cannot simply go without some sort of justification. Accordingly, this chapter will serve as a way towards unraveling the essence of transcendental philosophy. How then should we proceed?

Although it is ideal to go through all of the views raised earlier, I will only focus on two. Yet, such narrowing down should not at all be taken as evidence for the inadequacy of the approach. For one thing, a comprehensive study of all the instances is impossible not just practically but also methodologically. This is because the criteria required for identifying the instances is exactly what we are seeking. But it is also not necessary to do so for the purpose of our project. We are not seeking a comprehensive all-inclusive notion of transcendental philosophy but only one that is sufficient to seek out Heidegger's and

Nishida's relation to transcendental philosophy. Therefore, for the sake of our investigation, I will limit the scope to two cases: Kant and Husserl. I have specifically chosen these two cases not only because they are representatives of the tradition but because they are two key figures that one necessarily comes across when comparing Heidegger's and Nishida's relation to transcendental thought. This is due to the fact that Kant and Husserl were influential on them both, though in different ways. Regarding Nishida, however, there are other figures in the transcendental tradition that arguably had more influence on him, such as Hegel and Fichte. I will touch on their influence on Nishida in Part III when we examine Nishida's project but for the purpose of Part I, I have limited my focus to the common denominators. In the following, we will first look at Kant's transcendental philosophy and then proceed to examine Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. The aim of this chapter is to pave the way towards unraveling the essence of transcendental philosophy. The subsequent chapter will then proceed to articulate the essence of transcendental philosophy based on the investigations in this chapter.

1 Kant's transcendental philosophy

1.1 Against the way of ideas

Kant is generally regarded as the father of transcendental philosophy due to his systematic construction of a radically novel approach in philosophy. This is not to say that he came up with a completely new set of philosophical problems by ignoring the tradition before him. Just like any good philosopher (at least in my definition of the term), he followed the minds of his predecessors and in doing so, he saw the importance of the problems that they were grappling with. Kant's novelty lies not in setting forth new problems but in seeing the old problems in a completely different light.

The cardinal problem that Kant had inherited was the problem of how knowledge of the world is possible. This problem of knowledge is a specifically modern problem insofar as it arose from the theory of ideas originating with Descartes. Philosophers before Descartes naturally held the view that we are directly in touch with the world. Without going into the details, it was the skepticism regarding such naive realism that led to Descartes' discovery of the ideas. Descartes' theory of ideas, at least traditionally, has been interpreted as a representationalist view.¹ According to this interpretation, Descartes subscribed to the view that we are immediately aware of ideas and only mediately aware of external objects. To put it

¹ There are recent scholars who have proposed an alternative reading of Descartes' position. Rather than interpreting Descartes as a representationalist, they have interpreted him as a direct realist. Cf. Nadler (1989) and Volton (1975). I will leave this issue aside.

another way, the immediate objects of all forms of consciousness are 'ideas' (which are either mental states or mental entities), and these ideas refer to something beyond themselves, i.e. they *represent* objects. Such a representationalist view of consciousness is also commonly referred to as the "way of ideas." This was a view shared by many modern philosophers such as Locke, Berkeley and Hume, though they disagreed on the nature of these ideas. Now, since these ideas are somehow given to the subject and it is only via ideas that we become aware of objects, the crucial problem was to figure out *how* this could be carried out. In other words, the pressing question was: How can ideas represent external objects? Or formulated differently: How can ideas or representations (I use these terms interchangeably for my purposes here) correspond to objects? The modern problem of knowledge arose in this context. Namely, what justifies our knowledge of the external world if there is a veil between us and the world?

Most commentators on Kant agree that what distinguishes Kant from his predecessors is that he breaks with this tradition. But rather than denying the existence of ideas and representations altogether and returning to the pre-modern naive view that we are somehow directly in touch with the world, Kant addressed a completely different question than the problem of representation. Transcendental philosophy begins with Kant's discovery of this new question. As David Carr puts it, transcendental philosophy "attempts to revamp the philosophical project, attempts to pose new questions rather than provide new answers to old questions."² Instead of asking how representations can correspond to objects, Kant asked: *How is representation possible at all?* Here, it is important to understand that the two questions are radically different. The traditional question asks how a mental state or a mental entity can correspond to something completely different from itself, i.e. non-mental objects. The problem with this question is that it inevitably gives rise to skepticism regarding the external world, namely Cartesian skepticism. If we only have direct knowledge of ideas or representations and our knowledge of the external world is always indirectly inferred, how can we be certain that our representations really correspond to objects?

One way to reply to the skeptic is to dismiss the question as ill-founded. When various attempts to solve a problem have failed to succeed, then it is always a good tactic to ask whether it isn't the problem itself that is problematic. This is indeed where we find Kant's success. Rather than warding off the skeptic by trying to come up with a good reply and thereby admitting the legitimacy of the question, Kant dismissed the question to begin with. In this sense, though Kant's argument can be understood as a refutation of skepticism, it must be kept in mind that Kant was not trying to *prove* what the skeptics doubted, namely whether or not we have knowledge of the external world. To attempt such proof would be to admit that such proof is wanting. Rather, he saw that such proof is unnecessary for it was based on

² Carr 1999, p. 31.

questionable assumptions about the way the mind works in its relation to the world. Instead of assuming that the mind is equipped with representations that somehow reach out to the world, he began with the less controversial view that we are in possession of some a priori knowledge, i.e. knowledge that holds universally and necessarily. The success of mathematics and the natural sciences at the time was taken as evidence for this. Accordingly, granted that there is synthetic a priori knowledge, namely universal and necessary knowledge that is not merely tautological but adds to our body of knowledge, the question to ask was *how* this is possible. Moreover, in reorienting the problem this way, Kant was questioning the very conception of knowledge and representation, i.e. what knowledge and representation are in essence. To quote Carr again:

Kant is more concerned with what such knowledge is rather than whether we have it. In this sense his question would be prior to that of the skeptic. The *what* question is, if you will, a question of essence rather than existence, of possibility rather than actuality.³

While this *prima facie* looks like Kant is avoiding what seems like the most important issue, namely the actuality of representation or knowledge rather than their mere possibility, this is so only on the face of it. Firstly, in questioning the possibility of representation, Kant was reconfiguring what is at stake. In other words, he was redefining what “representations” are. As Frederick Beiser writes:

For Kant, no idea is simply given, but all are constructed, the products of more basic synthetic activities. [...] Representation is never something simple, basic, and given, but it is always something complex, derived, and constructed.⁴

This is not to say that Kant claimed that our mind constructs representations on its own with no external input. On the contrary, representations are products of our mind’s spontaneity *and receptivity*. The mind actively organizes the material given to us from outside the mind. As the famous quote goes, “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A51/B75)⁵. And, as Lee Braver has rightly noted, Kant’s discovery does not lie in the rather uninteresting claim that our mind makes a contribution to experience. No one was denying that the mind contributes to our experience. For example, Descartes and Locke both took secondary qualities as arising from our contribution to experience.⁶ What marks Kant’s position is that, while all of these thinkers took the mind’s contribution to be a negative

³ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴ Beiser 2002, p. 134.

⁵ I follow the standard practice of referring to the pages of the Academy Edition. These are given in both the English and the German versions on which I draw.

⁶ Braver 2007, p. 36.

contribution that distorts reality, Kant took this to be essential for our knowledge of reality. Namely, Kant reversed the idea regarding what the mind does: "Kant's revolution is to find this contribution not only acceptable but in fact *essential* for knowledge."⁷ In this way, in questioning the possibility of representation, Kant was asking how it is possible that knowledge of objects essentially involves the work of our minds. Furthermore, Kant was specifically interested in a particular type of knowledge: knowledge of objects that holds necessarily and universally or, to use Kantian language, *a priori* synthetic knowledge. Hence, the question "How is representation possible at all?" is further transformed into, "*How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?*" Therefore, it is not correct to say that Kant was avoiding the issue concerning the actuality of representation since he was indeed giving a positive account of it, albeit a different one from that of his predecessors.⁸

Moreover, it is in this regard that Kant has been acclaimed to have reconciled the two opposing schools, rationalism and empiricism. And it is common to hear that this is where Kant's greatest accomplishment lies. To put the opposition rather crudely, while rationalists demanded universal and necessary knowledge apparently unattainable through experience, empiricists insisted on the necessity of experience for knowledge. Kant was able to reconcile these two positions by claiming that knowledge depends on experience but only to the extent that it would lack content without the material given in experience. In other words, universality and necessity were granted by the mind's *a priori* contribution while still affording the mind's openness to the world.

Secondly, and related to the first point, it is not true that Kant was avoiding the issue of the actuality of representation since, in questioning the possibility of representation, he introduced a different dimension to the picture, so to say, that in fact reveals the actuality of the representation in a new light. Simply put, while Kant's predecessors were working with two categories, the subjective and the objective or the mental and the physical, Kant introduced a new category: *the transcendental*. While his predecessors were concerned with how a subjective (or mental) thing can correspond to an objective (or physical) thing, Kant questioned how it is possible that the subjective and the objective together constitute our knowledge. Accordingly, he questioned *the conditions of possibility for* the synthesis of the subjective and the objective (or the mental and the physical) and sought the answer in the newly discovered transcendental realm. Put differently, in questioning the possibility of representation, he sought the answer in neither the subjective nor the objective (or the mental and the physical) but *the transcendental dimension*, so to say. To be sure, this does not yet clarify how the introduction of this new

⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸ For a detailed discussion of how Kant's view of representations differs from his predecessors', see Beiser (2002).

transcendental dimension reconfigures the actuality of representations, but we will come back to this point later.

Hereto we have seen that Kant introduced a new question (“How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?”) and a new dimension (the transcendental) in addressing the problem of knowledge. But in order to understand Kant’s originality in full, we must get a grip on what this new dimension actually amounts to. Namely, what *is* the transcendental? Moreover, I have been freely using the word “transcendental” to qualify “dimension” and “realm” up to this point, but the word qualifies many other things: knowledge, inquiry, argument, philosophy, etc. In fact, there is one concept that is particularly important for clarifying the exact meaning of this term insofar as it defines the specific method employed in transcendental philosophy: *transcendental reflection*. Accordingly, in the following, let us see what Kant has to say about this transcendental reflection in relation to other kinds of reflection.

1.2 Transcendental reflection in Kant

Reflection, as generally understood in philosophical discourse, is the turning back of consciousness onto itself. But reflection can be further distinguished into various kinds depending on *how* it turns back onto itself and *what* is thematized as a result. A typical kind of this turning back of consciousness onto itself is introspection, or “inner sense” (*innere Sinn*) as Kant calls it in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, hereafter *Critique*). While we use our outer sense to represent objects that are external to us, it is with inner sense that we represent to ourselves our own mental states. According to Kant, whilst distinguished *vis-à-vis* the forms required for providing representations (*space* for outer sense and *time* for inner sense), both senses give us representations of “objects” in a broad sense. Just as outer sense gives us representations of external objects, inner sense provides representations of ourselves as objects. But this is not the only way we can become aware of ourselves. As Kant says, “this [i.e. inner sense] presents even ourselves to consciousness only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves” (B152-153). What Kant is alluding to here is the distinction between ourselves as objects (“as we appear to ourselves”) and ourselves as subjects (“as we are in ourselves”). Inner sense makes us aware of ourselves only in the former way but not the latter. Since inner sense, in a similar vein to outer sense, makes us aware of ourselves as objects and only as objects, Kant designates such consciousness of

ourselves as “merely empirical, forever variable” (A107).⁹ Let us call this kind of reflection (introspection or inner sense) “empirical reflection” as others have done¹⁰ since it is consciousness turning back onto itself and takes itself as objects for further empirical investigation (e.g. it inquires about the real properties of my perception, its causal origins, etc.). We can also call this reflection, more specifically, “psychological reflection” as it is in psychology that this kind of reflection is typically employed to investigate the real properties of the mind.

In the appendix to the Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique* titled, “On the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection,” Kant introduces a different kind of reflection to empirical or psychological reflection (A260-263/B316-319). He calls it “transcendental reflection” (*transzendente Überlegung* or *Reflexion*) and gives the following characterization:

The action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition, I call *transcendental reflection* [*transzendente Überlegung*]. (A261/B317)

Since this definition is not very straightforward, some explanation is fitting. Kant believed that a specific kind of reflection is required prior to making any sort of judgment. As he says: “all judgments, indeed all comparisons, require a *reflection* [*Überlegung*], i.e. distinction of the cognitive power to which the given concepts belong” (A261/B317). What he is referring to by reflection here is not the empirical reflection that we have seen earlier but what he calls transcendental reflection. Let us say, for instance, that we make the statement, “This cup is blue.” Kant is saying that, in order to be able to make this judgment and, indeed, in order to even be able to compare the two representations “cup” and “blue,” we must first deliberate and work out which cognitive faculty, i.e. understanding or sensibility, each belongs to. In other words, it is only because we come to know through deliberation that cups are sensible objects to which color concepts can apply that we are able to make this statement in a meaningful way. We would be failing to properly employ transcendental reflection if we were to say, for example, “Causes are blue,” since we otherwise know that causes are non-sensible things and hence cannot take on color. Transcendental reflection, according to Kant, is thus the deliberation of representations with regard to the cognitive faculty to which they belong.

⁹ In the same context Kant calls this “empirical apperception” and distinguishes it from “transcendental apperception” which is the consciousness of ourselves as subjects. Since my focus here is on the distinction between empirical and transcendental *reflection* and not so much on the modes of self-consciousness, though closely related, I have left out the discussion about apperception here.

¹⁰ E.g. Schnädelbach (1977) and Mohanty (1985).

But then, how exactly is this different from empirical reflection? Kant explains:

Reflection (reflexio) does not have to do with objects themselves, in order to acquire concepts directly from them, but rather is the state of mind in which we first prepare ourselves to find out the subjective conditions under which we can arrive at concepts. (A260/B316)

Again, what Kant is referring to with “reflection” here is specifically “transcendental reflection” and not any other kind. For we have seen that empirical reflection is indeed concerned with some kind of “objects themselves,” i.e. our own mental states. Instead of taking a domain of objects with a view to determining its properties, transcendental reflection inquires into the *subjective conditions* for the possibility of representations with a view to determining its source, i.e. whether it belongs to understanding or sensibility.

Transcendental reflection, understood in this way, is in accordance with the oft-quoted definition of transcendental knowledge given in the Introduction to the *Critique*:

I call all cognition *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible a priori. (A 11-12/B25)

Transcendental knowledge is not a priori knowledge of objects themselves but a priori knowledge of our *cognition of objects*. Some have given expression to this distinction by resorting to a terminology used by the neo-Kantians, Nicolai Hartmann and Theodor Adorno: *intentio recta* and *intentio obliqua*. In the context of distinguishing transcendental inquiry from all first-order inquiries, for example, Steven Crowell makes use of this terminology:

First-order inquiries – whether empirical like physics and psychology or a priori like mathematics and metaphysics – are carried out in an *intentio recta* and they establish the real properties of their objects. Transcendental critique, in contrast, asks how it is possible that such first-order thinking *can* yield knowledge, and it deals with objects and their properties only in a reflective *intentio obliqua* concerned with what makes them cognitively accessible.¹¹

Whatever else the terms may signify, I take it that Crowell with some others¹² has used the term *intentio recta* to basically denote our consciousness of objects (whether they be physical, psychical, mathematical or metaphysical) while using *intentio obliqua* to signify the consciousness of the subjective aspects of cognition or, more precisely put, the *subjective conditions* for the possibility of our cognition of objects. I add the latter qualification since psychological reflection also inquires into the subjective aspects of

¹¹ Crowell 2013, p. 11.

¹² E.g. Mohanty 1985, p. xviii.

cognition yet is a version of the *intentio recta* insofar as it is an investigation into the mind understood as some kind of an object or entity existing in the world. *Intentio obliqua*, in this context, specifies a second-order consciousness that looks into the subjective conditions of our cognition of objects. The important observation to note is that, whether it be reflection, knowledge, critique, inquiry or anything else, whenever the qualification “transcendental” is added, it means that the concern is not so much with objects themselves but with the subjective conditions for the possibility of our knowledge of objects. In this sense (and I want to stress this point as it is important), *the transcendental essentially designates a second-order discourse*.

Transcendental knowledge is, furthermore, designated as the *a priori knowledge* of our cognition of objects. This means that transcendental knowledge is the *necessary and universal knowledge* of our cognition of objects. Importantly, however, a priority is not sufficient to designate transcendental knowledge. Mathematical knowledge, for example, is a priori but not transcendental. What distinguishes transcendental knowledge from other a priori knowledge is that it is essentially concerned with our cognition of *objects*. Accordingly, to rephrase our earlier formulation: *transcendental reflection is a second-order reflection into the a priori subjective conditions of the possibility of our knowledge of objects*.

In the same section where Kant introduces transcendental reflection, he raises another kind of reflection that is to be distinguished from both empirical and transcendental reflection. He calls this third kind of reflection, “logical reflection.” Logical reflection is “a mere comparison” (A262/B318) in which “we simply compare our concepts with each other in the understanding” (A279/B335). It is through logical reflection that we come to see, for example, that the concepts “blue” and “color” are related through inclusion, i.e. that “blue” is a concept that is contained in the concept “color.” Therefore, in logical reflection, “there is complete abstraction from the cognitive power to which the given representations belong” (A262/B318). Logical reflection, then, is a mere logical deliberation that abstracts away from the source of the representations.

Having laid out the three kinds of reflection discussed by Kant, namely empirical, transcendental and logical reflection, we are now in a position to see in what way Kant was original with his answer to the problem of knowledge and more specifically to the question, how is synthetic a priori knowledge possible? To begin with, it is evident that the answer cannot be sought through logical reflection, for a logical analysis of the concepts, “synthesis,” “a priori,” and “knowledge,” can yield no more than what the concepts already entail, and the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge is simply not entailed in any of the concepts, either taken individually or together. Accordingly, the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge can only be investigated through empirical or transcendental reflection. It is here that we can

identify Kant's true contribution. For Kant sought the answer to the above question in the transcendental *and not the empirical*. In other words, Kant was specifically seeking the *a priori* conditions, which were not real properties of objects but that which makes possible our knowledge of objects and, hence, is second-order. Therefore, Kant's originality lies in discovering transcendental reflection as the specific kind of method to seek out the answer to the question, how is synthetic a priori knowledge possible.

1.3 The status of the transcendental: psychological vs. logical interpretation

As we have seen above, one of the important facets of the Kantian legacy is to have delineated the transcendental dimension in contrast to the logical and the empirical. We have, moreover, seen that the transcendental designates a second-order inquiry insofar as it turns away from objects themselves and inquires into their conditions of possibility. In this way, Kant seems to have successfully found a novel way to deal with the old problem of knowledge. Yet despite the alleged discovery of the transcendental, its exact nature still seems elusive. The question remains: What *are* these conditions that make possible our knowledge of objects?

Kant did not in fact give a decisive answer but instead wavered between two conceptions. These two rather different conceptions are most notable in the Transcendental Deduction where he discusses the status of the categories and the differences are reflected in the A- and B-editions of the section. The two conceptions, moreover, have become a touchstone that divides Kant's successors. In the A-edition, Kant traces the origin of the categories in the threefold synthesis of the mind, namely the apprehension of representations in intuition, reproduction in imagination and recognition in concepts. In the B-edition, however, the spontaneity of understanding is emphasized at the expense of the others. The first interpretation takes Kant's appeal to the threefold synthesis in the A-edition to indicate the psychological origin of the categories. According to this interpretation, often referred to as the *psychological interpretation*, the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects are nothing but our cognitive operations. What makes possible knowledge of objects is what we happen to be equipped with. This would further imply that Kant is committed to the fallacy of psychologism, i.e. the attempt to ground logical laws on psychological laws. Yet this interpretation is hardly in line with the description of the transcendental that we have already seen, namely that it is a priori and that it is a second-order inquiry. If the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects are nothing but our cognitive operations, then transcendental inquiry reduces to psychological inquiry, i.e. a first-order empirical inquiry into our minds.

Furthermore, the psychological interpretation fails to account for the objective validity of the categories. The aim of the Transcendental Deduction was precisely to show that the categories are not only the necessary structures of our mind but that they also hold for all rational beings and are the necessary structures of objects. As Beiser rightly notes, even if the attempt in the Deduction is a failure, the psychological interpretation must first contend with the Deduction itself and provide an account of why it was a failure.¹³

The second interpretation, often called the *logical interpretation*, takes the B-edition seriously and avoids these difficulties by maintaining a purely logical reading of the transcendental. The proponents of this interpretation see that so long as one is interested in how cognition makes knowledge of objects possible, one is stuck in a first-order inquiry since this entails investigating the mind's faculties and activities. As a result, the question of *cognition* is replaced by that of the *justification* of some beliefs. The conditions for the possibility of our knowledge of objects then amount to the *truth-conditions* of our judgments.¹⁴ This interpretation is supported by Kant's famous employment of the juridical distinction between the *quid juris* and *quid facti*, the question of right and question of fact (A84/B116). "By what right do concepts relate a priori to objects" (i.e. what *justifies* our beliefs about the world) is a different question from that which questions the factual or causal origin of those concepts. Only the former is relevant to the transcendental deduction of concepts. As Kant explains:

I therefore call the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori* their transcendental deduction, and distinguish this from empirical deduction, which shows how a concept is acquired through experience and reflection on it, and therefore concerns not the lawfulness but the fact from which the possession has arisen. (A85/B117)

This distinction between the *quid juris* and *quid facti* was later emphasized by Hermann Lotze and the neo-Kantians. Lotze maintained that we must distinguish between the realms of existence (or matters of fact) and validity. To ask about the truth or validity of a judgment is quite different from asking about matters of fact.¹⁵ Following Lotze, both the Marburg school and the Baden school of neo-Kantians agreed that the questions of being, factuality, and causality are different sorts of questions from those regarding validity, value and normativity. They believed that psychologism in logic could only be avoided by seeing that the transcendental investigates not the former but the latter. In this way, the neo-Kantians gave an unambiguous characterization of the transcendental by identifying it with the normative. Reformulated

¹³ Beiser 2002, pp. 168-169.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁵ Cf. Lotze 1884, §§ 316-317.

and revived by the neo-Kantians, transcendental inquiry therefore designated second-order inquiry as the *normative* (and thus a priori) conditions for the possibility of our knowledge of objects.

Perhaps the biggest advantage the logical interpretation has over the psychological is that it does justice to the defining aspect of the transcendental, namely its second-order status. It is not surprising then that this interpretation, specifically with its emphasis on normativity, has gained much support among contemporary Kantian scholars and transcendental philosophers alike. Steven Crowell, for example, supports this interpretation in his formulation of Kant's transcendental project:

Kant's project is not concerned with the real relation between a representation and its object but solely with the cognitive claim advanced in it, and the question of how knowledge is possible is not a factual but a normative one. It does not look for some causal connection between mind and world but investigates how a concept can hold of something – not “how can something represent an object?” but “how can it do so correctly?”¹⁶

When the transcendental is fleshed out in terms of justification and normativity, however, transcendental philosophy begins to look as if it deals exclusively with the epistemological problematic. One may not think this is a worry since what prompted Kant to begin with was nothing other than the problem of knowledge. But one must be careful in characterizing Kant's transcendental philosophy as *purely* epistemological. While it can hardly be doubted that Kant was interested in the problem of knowledge, it is controversial whether that was Kant's *sole* interest. Or better put, it is highly questionable that Kant believed that the question regarding our knowledge of objects can be separated from the question regarding the ontological constitution of objects. This is an important point that deserves a separate section below since it has implications for the scope of transcendental philosophy.

But before turning to this point, there is another point worth mentioning regarding the two interpretations. Although the logical interpretation is more appealing than the psychological, there is room to question whether we can do away with the latter side altogether in defining the transcendental. For, granting that normativity and factuality are different issues, the very idea of normativity only makes sense against the backdrop of our actual activities. What is a norm if it is not a norm *for our conduct*? As Beiser says:

¹⁶ Crowell 2013, p. 11.

The very idea of a norm is that of a constraint on activity; and the very idea of a rule is that which governs or imposes limits on conduct. So if there were no activity or conduct, there would be no purpose in invoking the idea of a norm or rule in the first place.”¹⁷

Or more succinctly put in a different paper: “‘Ought’ implies ‘can’, so that if people cannot act on norms they lose all their validity.¹⁸ Indeed, the very idea of truth-conditions of our judgments is dependent on the fact that we can make true *and* false judgments. In other words, the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge entails not only its logical but *real* possibility.

Beiser subsequently argues that neither the logical nor the psychological interpretation, taken on its own, can provide a complete picture of the transcendental. They are not mutually exclusive:

We can consider the transcendental as both logical and psychological, as laying down constraints both about how we *ought* to think and about how we *must* do so [*vis-à-vis* the activities of our mind].¹⁹

This is indeed the lesson to learn from the one-sidedness of the two interpretations: the transcendental must encompass both transcendental logic *and* psychology. To be sure, one of the main challenges that this then creates is to account for how we can appeal to our acts of cognition without falling into the pitfalls of the psychological interpretation. Transcendental psychology, in the way Kant had envisioned it, also had its own problems such as the entire matter of the faculties of the mind. These challenges were taken up by Husserl who developed the phenomenological version of transcendental philosophy to which we will turn shortly. But before we do so, let us turn to the aforementioned question regarding the scope of Kantian transcendental philosophy.

1.4 The scope of transcendental philosophy: epistemological vs. ontological reading

It has often been assumed that transcendental philosophy is a discipline in epistemology *and not ontology*. Let us recite Kant’s famous definition of the transcendental:

I call all cognition *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible a priori. (A11-12/B25)

Prima facie, insofar as transcendental philosophy is characterized by a turning away from objects to our a priori knowledge of them, the claim that transcendental philosophy is essentially epistemological does

¹⁷ Beiser 2002, p. 172.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

seem legitimate. Historically, what made this epistemological reading dominant was the neo-Kantians' logical interpretation and their identification of the transcendental with normativity. On this account, transcendental conditions are equivalent to normative conditions and, as a corollary, transcendental philosophy is primarily epistemological. Now, if the conditions that make our knowledge of objects possible are *merely* normative conditions with no ontological commitment, as some neo-Kantians would supposedly contend, then these conditions would determine our knowledge of objects but *not* the way objects are in themselves. According to this view, transcendental philosophy has no implications for the nature of objects. Ontology would stand outside the realm of transcendental philosophy.

The following key statement in the beginning of the Transcendental Analytic, however, attests that this understanding of the scope of the transcendental proves too minimal:

The conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*, and on this account have objective validity in a synthetic judgment a priori. (A158/B197)

Here, Kant is clear that the transcendental conditions determine not only our knowledge of objects but also the objects of our knowledge. Moreover, this should not be taken as indicative of an inconsistency on Kant's part. Rather, these claims suggest that, when one considers the full implications of transcendental inquiry, it has significant ramifications on the nature of objects.

To begin with, insofar as the transcendental is an inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of our knowledge *of objects*, it is simply false that it has no bearing on objects. Admittedly, transcendental inquiry does not inquire into objects in the same way as first-order inquiries do. As we have stressed, the second-order status of the transcendental ensures that it is essentially distinguished from all first-order inquiries of the empirical sciences as well as metaphysical inquiries that similarly thematize objects (empirical or metaphysical) with a view to determining their first-order properties. But this does not entail that transcendental inquiry is *not* concerned with objects themselves. We should in fact take Kant's wording at face value when he says that transcendental knowledge is concerned "*not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori.*" Kant is not denying that the transcendental is concerned with objects; he is only asserting that the concern is more with our knowledge of objects than with objects. While this still leaves open the exact relation that pertains between our knowledge of objects and objects themselves, it does nevertheless suggest their close relation in transcendental discourse.

Indeed, an important point to take from this is that transcendental inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of our knowledge of objects is not cut off from inquiry into objects in a way that makes the

latter inquiry irrelevant to the former and vice versa. This is indeed one of the misunderstandings of the exclusively epistemological reading. According to this interpretation, the transcendental is a realm independent of the realm of objects (both empirical and metaphysical).²⁰ What is fatal about this kind of understanding is that it limits the scope of the transcendental in a way that undermines the core of Kant's discovery. As we have seen, the transcendental question was introduced by Kant in order to tackle the problem of knowledge in a way that evades the skeptics' charge. If we delimit the scope of the transcendental to our knowledge of objects, leaving the realm of objects unaffected by our question, transcendental knowledge deflates into subjective knowledge that has no objective validity. This would allow Cartesian skepticism to loom again. In fact, speaking of different "realms" is altogether misleading since the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical (as well as the metaphysical) does not imply two ontological realms but is merely a difference in the levels of discourse. Transcendental inquiry is different from metaphysical inquiry in this sense since the defining trait of the latter is to thematize a distinct ontological realm from the empirical. Rather than speaking of realms, it may be helpful to speak metaphorically of "dimensions" as I have done earlier. In fact, Husserl also speaks of the transcendental as a "new dimension."²¹ An analogy may be helpful to clarify this point. When we put on 3D glasses to watch a three-dimensional film, we do not believe that the glasses have somehow introduced a different reality from the two-dimensional reality. The third dimension enables us to see the film with depth and so perhaps with "more reality," but it is ontologically the same reality as the one depicted two-dimensionally. Likewise, the transcendental dimension articulates the nature of reality in a different way from how we observe objects empirically, but it does not thereby introduce a new reality. Accordingly, transcendental inquiry introduces not a distinct realm but another dimension that sheds light on the way objects are, not just how they appear to us but how they are in themselves.

It is due to these reasons that transcendental inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of our knowledge of objects must also be an inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of objects of our knowledge. The epistemological reading, therefore, can only be endorsed by being blind to the full import of the transcendental. Transcendental inquiry not only reconfigures what knowledge consists of but it also fundamentally redefines what objects are in themselves. This is also why transcendental idealism is part

²⁰ For example, Ernst Cassirer says: "The essential characteristic of Kant's transcendental method consists in the fact that it operates not in the realm of empirically real things or events, but purely and exclusively in the realm of truths and their ideal mode of validity." (1923, pp. 427-428 [quoted in Gardner 2015, p. 9; translation by Gardner])

²¹ Hua VI, §32. All citations from Husserl are from the *Husserliana* (abbreviated as Hua), followed by volume number (Roman numerals) and page number (or section number). I have given the pagination from the original German first followed by a slash and pagination from the English translation, wherever this is available. I have followed the available English translations in my citations.

and parcel of Kant's transcendental project. One simply cannot avoid transcendental idealism if we see that the transcendental essentially has ontological implications.²²

Having delineated Kant's idea of transcendental philosophy, let us now turn to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

2 Husserl's transcendental phenomenology

2.1 Husserl's evaluation of Kantian transcendental philosophy

How does Husserl's transcendental phenomenology differ from Kant's transcendental philosophy? What was Husserl's relationship to Kant? Unlike his neo-Kantian contemporaries, Husserl did not develop his thought through an internal development of Kantian philosophy. Owing much to the fact that his mentor, Franz Brentano, was an anti-Kantian, he was rather critical to the whole Kantian enterprise in his earlier years. It was only after his turn to transcendental phenomenology around 1913, when *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, hereafter *Ideas I*) was published that he became more and more expressive about his debt to the great philosopher and phenomenology's relationship to Kant's transcendental philosophy. In the following, let us take as our starting point the published version of a famous lecture held on 1 March 1924 in Freiburg in celebration of the bicentenary of Kant's birth. In this lecture titled, "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy," Husserl articulates Kant's significance as he understands it as well as the reasons why he believes transcendental philosophy must necessarily take the shape of a transcendental phenomenology. This lecture will guide us in understanding the crux of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, specifically as it relates to Kant's transcendental philosophy.

Husserl's basic attitude towards transcendental philosophy is stated in the beginning of the lecture:

[A]ny philosophy whatsoever, taken as a systematic whole, can assume the form of an ultimately rigorous science only as a universal transcendental philosophy, but also only on the basis of phenomenology and in the specifically phenomenological method.²³

²² Furthermore, once we see that the scope of the transcendental reaches well into the domain of the ontological, we can see that Heidegger's ontological interpretation of Kant's *Critique* is not as controversial as it may seem. Since Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is a controversial topic that deserves attention on its own, however, I will not go into any detail here.

²³ Hua VII, pp. 230-231/10.

A couple of important points can be immediately extracted from this quotation: (1) Husserl seeks after philosophy as a rigorous science, (2) such philosophy is possible only as a universal transcendental philosophy, and (3) such universal transcendental philosophy is possible only on the basis of phenomenology. With regard to the first point, one should recall Husserl's essay titled "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" published in 1910-11. In this essay, he argues that it is essential for philosophy to find its own firm foundation and distance itself from both naturalism and historicism in order to acquire the status of a strict and rigorous science. Not surprisingly, such a firm foundation was to be sought in phenomenology. In the 1924 lecture, Husserl explains how phenomenology as an eidetic descriptive science delineated in the *Logical Investigations* (*Logische Untersuchungen*) soon blossomed into transcendental phenomenological philosophy around the time of *Ideas I*. Cutting a long story short, it was Husserl's strong aspiration for a first philosophy (i.e. the a priori science of all sciences) that enacted the turn to pure transcendental consciousness as the fundamental source of all knowledge and, thereby, allowed the purely descriptive discipline to develop into a transcendental one. What this means and how this was possible will become clearer in the following pages. But my concern here will not be to trace the trajectory of Husserl's thought. Rather, the aim is to articulate the way in which transcendental phenomenology is a critical development of Kantian transcendental philosophy. For this purpose, I will be focusing on Husserl's evaluation of Kantian philosophy.

Husserl states that Kant's lasting significance lies in the "much discussed but little understood 'Copernican' turn to an interpretation of the world that was new in principle and thereby rigorously scientific" and, further, in the "first grounding of the 'completely new' science belonging thereto – i.e., the transcendental."²⁴ He then notes that Kant was the first to consider science "not merely objectively as theories of objective actualities and possibilities" but as "subjective cognitive performances in the consciousness generally."²⁵ In this lecture, Husserl repeatedly emphasizes this point, namely that Kant's revolution is the actualization of the turn "from the naive positive stage of world-cognition to a world-cognition through ultimate self-consciousness of cognition."²⁶ Put differently, Kant's transcendental philosophy awakened us from the naive view that the world (or nature) is objectively out there, existing apart from us, to the idea that it is in fact an achievement of transcendental subjectivity. The same point is made in *Crisis to European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy* (*Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie*, hereafter *Crisis*) published in 1936:

²⁴ Ibid., p. 240/17.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 280/50.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 286/55.

[Transcendental philosophy is] a philosophy which, in opposition to prescientific and scientific objectivism, goes back to knowing subjectivity as the primal locus of all objective formations of sense and ontic validities, undertakes to understand the existing world as a structure of sense and validity, and in this way seeks to set in motion an essentially new type of scientific attitude and a new type of philosophy.²⁷

Admittedly, this definition of transcendental philosophy is given in the context of critically situating Kant's philosophy as falling short of achieving this end due to its "lack of radicalism."²⁸ Likewise, in the 1924 lecture course, his appraisal of Kant basically ends here. Since Husserl's intention was never to improve Kantian philosophy from within the Kantian framework but solely to "see Kant with phenomenological eyes," his evaluation of Kant is clear-cut. The rest of the lecture is devoted to showing the "phenomenological sense of the Kantian revolution."²⁹ It is to this that we shall now turn.

Husserl marks Kant's shortcomings in allegedly failing to penetrate the true foundations, the basic problematics and the ultimately valid method of a transcendental philosophy. According to Husserl, this last point proves to be fatal. In *Ideas I*, Husserl introduced the *phenomenological epoché*, a method of "bracketing" the existence of objects (and the whole world) in order to thematize the phenomenological given in full clarity. Such bracketing was to be clearly distinguished from a denial of or skepticism regarding the existence of objects and the world. It is rather the suspension of the general positing character of our "natural attitude." While we generally believe that things are simply there, existing apart from us regardless of our existence (a characteristic feature of the natural attitude), the phenomenological *epoché* leads us to "bracket", i.e. put out of operation, such universal belief. Since this procedure of bracketing is a way to abstain from relying on our beliefs in the existence of objects and the world, the *epoché* is primarily a negative method. Crowell underscores this point *vis-à-vis* phenomenology's exclusive commitment to the first-person method:

The point of the *epoché*, then, is primarily negative: it precludes me from appealing in my analysis to *any* third-person explanatory *theories* of the experience in question (for instance, causal-genetic ones), since any such theory necessarily posits the existence of both *explanans* and *explanandum*. The *epoché* expresses transcendental phenomenology's commitment to the analytic autonomy of first-person experience.³⁰

Once we have bracketed the belief in the existence of objects and the world, then the phenomenological givenness of intentionality, i.e. the meaningful structure of experience, can be fully

²⁷ Hua VI, p.102/99.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 103/100.

²⁹ Hua VII, p. 237/15.

³⁰ Crowell 2012, p. 28.

thematized. And this thematization of the purified field of intentionality, which is now illuminated as having a noesis-noema structure, is called the *phenomenological reduction*. In the 1924 lecture, Husserl regards the phenomenological reduction as “the most fundamental of all methods”³¹ and insists that transcendental philosophy necessarily be grounded by it:

It is to develop in ultimate philosophical self-consciousness the method of phenomenological reduction, through which the concrete thematic horizon of transcendental philosophy – transcendental subjectivity in its true sense – is founded, and simultaneously with it the mode of work appropriate only to it, the ordering of the problematics arising from the intuitive origins is discovered.³²

Husserl argues that, despite his discovery of subjectivity’s synthesis and having practiced, “in his own naivete, genuine intentional analysis,” Kant was unable to develop a concrete analysis of consciousness precisely because he had failed to execute the phenomenological reduction. In positing the thing-in-itself, which Husserl regards as one of the “‘metaphysical’ stock elements of the critique of reason,” Kant was still somehow holding on to our naive belief in objects existing independently of us.

While Husserl reproaches Kant for lacking the phenomenological reduction in this lecture and takes this to be his fatal flaw, the failure to recognize the phenomenological reduction in fact entails a failure to see a more basic feature of the phenomenological method, namely phenomenology’s appeal to *intuitive evidence* and demand for *descriptions*. Indeed, Husserl’s criticism of Kant in the *Crisis* revolves around this point in relation to what he calls Kant’s “regressive method” or, as he writes more specifically, “the obscurities of the Kantian philosophy, about the incomprehensibility of the evidences of his regressive method.”³³ Kant’s inquiry begins with the fact of certain scientific knowledge and moves on, in a regressive way, to the a priori subjective conditions that make such knowledge possible. Accordingly, as Husserl puts it in the 1924 lecture, Kant’s regressive method asks:

[U]nder which forms of concept and law must an objective world (a nature) stand in general, which is supposed to be experienceable as one and the same world for all cognizers in the synthesis of possible experience?³⁴

The problem with such a method, as Husserl sees it, lies not in the regressive method as such, for this is something that all transcendental inquiries share, in his eyes, insofar as it proceeds from our experience or our cognition of objects to the subjective conditions of possibility for such experience or cognition.

³¹ Hua VII, p. 234/12.

³² Ibid., p. 237/15.

³³ Hua VI, p. 116/114.

³⁴ Hua VII, pp. 280-281/51.

According to Husserl, far from being problematic, the regressive method is necessary for any transcendental undertaking.

The problem with Kant's method, then, is that he does not have a way of providing sufficient evidence for the transcendental conditions. In other words, the forms of intuition, the categories of thought and transcendental subjectivity, all of which constitute the transcendental, are reached by transcendental arguments that bear no intuitive evidence. Husserl observes that this was due to Kant's limited conception of "intuition." For Kant, the only kind of "intuition" that could be a possible candidate in providing evidence for such conditions was "inner perception" or "inner sense." But inner perception was a way of representing our mental states as objects in an analogous way to how external perception represents external objects. As we have already seen, such a way of perceiving ourselves cannot capture us in our transcendental constitution. In this way, Kant leaves us with an unattractive choice between empirical or psychological intuition on the one hand and, what Husserl dubs, "mythical concept-formation" on the other. Hence Husserl's severe verdict on Kant:

He [Kant] forbids his readers to transpose the results of his regressive procedure into intuitive concepts, forbids every attempt to carry out a progressive construction which begins with original and purely self-evident intuitions and proceeds through truly self-evident individual steps. *His transcendental concepts are thus unclear in a quite peculiar way, such that for reasons of principle they can never be transposed into clarity, can never be transformed into a formation of meaning which is direct and procures self-evidence.*³⁵

If Kant had not been bound to the naturalistic psychology of his time and had allowed himself to seek the proper intuitive method, the regressive method would have looked completely different. As Husserl puts it, it would have been "not a mythically, constructively inferring [*schliessende*] method, but a thoroughly intuitively disclosing [*erschliessende*] method, intuitive in its point of departure and in everything it discloses."³⁶ To be sure, this "thoroughly intuitively disclosing method, intuitive in its point of departure and in everything it discloses," is a defining method for phenomenology. It is closely related to what Husserl calls the "principle of all principles" in *Ideas I*:

*[E]very originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition [...] everything originally (so to speak, in its "personal" actuality) offered to us in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.*³⁷

³⁵ Hua VI, pp. 117-118/115 (my italics).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 118/115-116.

³⁷ Hua III, p. 51/44.

This appeal to intuition, moreover, goes hand in hand with the descriptive method of phenomenology. These two defining features of phenomenology are encapsulated in the brief definition of phenomenology that Husserl offers in *Ideas I*: “phenomenology is, in fact, a *purely descriptive* discipline, exploring the field of transcendently pure consciousness by *pure intuition*.”³⁸ From the above, we can identify Husserl’s main differences from Kant with his insistence on the phenomenological method which is characterized by the phenomenological reduction, its descriptive nature and its appeal to intuitive evidence.

Now, while Husserl argues with regard to Kant that transcendental philosophy must have its basis in phenomenology if it is to be a rigorous science, Husserl is in fact claiming the opposite as well, namely that phenomenology must become transcendental if it is to be a rigorous science. How so? Husserl explains that it is the “radicalism and the universality of a pure meditation on consciousness” that is essential in discovering the transcendental dimension of our experience and making the conversion from our natural way of thinking:

If we remain consistent in this sort of meditation, with a radical consistency that quite exclusively goes after subjective and intersubjective consciousness in all its actual and possible forms, particular and synthetic forms, and quite exclusively directs its gaze upon what belongs to consciousness in and for itself – *then we are already in the transcendental attitude*.³⁹

This “radicalism” and kind of “radical consistency” is further defined as “the firm resolve to bring consciousness, consciousness in its pure own-essentialness, exclusively to intuitive self-comprehension and to theoretical cognition, and thereby consciousness in its full concretion.”⁴⁰ Put this way, it is clear that such radicalism is none other than what phenomenology as an eidetic discipline itself demands.

But if this is the case, then is Husserl saying that phenomenology is *by definition* transcendental? This cannot be a plausible reading since it would not square with his own interpretation of his work in the *Logical Investigations* as work within pre-transcendental phenomenology. Husserl acknowledges that, during that time, he was engaged in a descriptive investigation of the eidetic structures of consciousness that still deserves to be called phenomenology (as opposed to psychology which is a science of facts and not essences) but that was not yet transcendental. Consequently, the radicalism that Husserl is talking about here must have to do with the possibility of phenomenology’s developing into a transcendental discipline. Therefore, transcendental phenomenology can be understood as phenomenology *par excellence*.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 127/136.

³⁹ Hua VII, p. 254/28 (my italics).

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 254/29.

In this way, not only does transcendental philosophy demand a phenomenological turn, phenomenology too must take a transcendental turn.

2.2 Transcendental reflection in Husserl

When speaking about the specific method employed in transcendental phenomenology, as we saw above in the 1924 lecture, Husserl puts particular emphasis on the phenomenological method insofar as that is what constitutes the ultimate basis for philosophy as a rigorous science. Moreover, we have seen that the radicalism of the phenomenological method is precisely what requires phenomenology to become a transcendental discipline. In this sense, the phenomenological method *par excellence* amounts to the *transcendental-phenomenological* method. But here the question naturally arises: how does *reflection* figure in the transcendental-phenomenological method? What does Husserl have to say about reflection as a method? Insofar as philosophy is a reflective endeavor, the question cannot be avoided. And it is especially relevant in the context of seeking out the relation between Kantian transcendental philosophy and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

In the literature, we find mixed views on this matter. Some commentators have resisted characterizing Husserlian phenomenology as a reflective endeavor because of its possible misunderstandings.⁴¹ Others have done much to identify reflection as the defining feature of Husserl's version of phenomenology in contrast to others', e.g. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.⁴² As a matter of fact, in *Ideas I*, Husserl explicitly claims that "the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection."⁴³ But to be sure, one must first clarify what Husserl means by reflection here before taking a step further and asking whether Husserl was right about his appraisal. What kind of reflection does Husserl have in mind in the above statement?

To begin with, reflection in general is, in Husserl's words, a "bending of consciousness back upon itself."⁴⁴ This bending back, moreover, is necessarily and in a certain sense an *alteration* of the original experience. When I perceive a house, for example, my gaze is directed at the house and *not* the perceiving itself. But what happens when I reflect on this act is that the perception itself becomes the object of my reflection *for the first time*. In this way, the original "straightforwardly" executed acts become modified in

⁴¹ Cf. Overgaard 2004, pp. 49-50.

⁴² von Herrmann 2000.

⁴³ Hua III, p. 162/174.

⁴⁴ Hua VII, p. 262/35.

reflection in the specific sense that in reflection, and *only* in reflection, these straightforward acts become accessible to us (at least as the object of my reflection). This is a common feature of reflection in general. But if one proceeds to say that phenomenologists employ reflection understood in the above sense, then phenomenology begins to look like an introspective discipline concerned exclusively with one's own mental acts. This is in fact the or at least part of the rationale behind Søren Overgaard's claim that "one should not overemphasize the *reflective* character of Husserl's phenomenology"⁴⁵:

We do not become phenomenologists by somehow shutting out the world and then turning to describe what we find in ourselves, in our experiences. In other words, the difference between the naturally attuned person and the phenomenologist is *not* that the former makes first order claims such as, "This keyboard is dirty," whereas the latter limits himself to introspective reports like, "I now see that the keyboard is dirty" – contrary, perhaps, to some of Husserl's own less fortunate formulations. This kind of introspective report cannot serve phenomenology, because phenomenology has no interest in what particular persons might be experiencing at particular points in time; its interest is devoted to the fundamental principles of *world-constitution*, as explained above.⁴⁶

As Overgaard emphasizes here, the proper method of phenomenology is not to be found in introspection simply because it cannot serve the purposes of phenomenology. Introspection can only yield particular reports about our own mental states and furthermore, in doing so, one does not question the belief that mental acts belong to human beings who are part of the world. Phenomenology, however, is an eidetic discipline concerned with "world-constitution." In other words, the interest of phenomenology lies in articulating how the world is constituted in our experience, *not* how our psyche works *apart from* the world. Accordingly, if one works with this notion of reflection, one has to either altogether give up reflection as the method of phenomenology or otherwise give an exposition of reflection that does not have the same downfalls of introspection.

Husserl takes up the latter by distinguishing between what he calls *natural* or *psychological reflection* and *transcendental reflection*. And indeed, it is only by embracing the latter sense of reflection that Husserlian phenomenology can properly be called reflective. Overgaard also notes the importance of making this distinction and submits that Husserlian phenomenology can only be characterized as reflective when reflection is understood in this latter sense. Moreover, the important point about transcendental reflection, according to Overgaard, is that what is thematized as a result is "the world" and *not* our experience:

⁴⁵ Overgaard 2004, p. 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

When we are doing phenomenology, we are entering (through the *epoché*) into a new relationship with “the world” (cf. *Hua* VI, p. 147), a relationship that may indeed be labeled “reflective.” It is, one could say, the *world* that is reflected on, and *not* our experiences, since it is in relation to the world that we have been able to gain a little distance. In this sense, and – I submit – in this sense only, Husserlian phenomenology is fundamentally “reflective”; not in the sense that it bases itself on (introspective) reflections on thoughts and experiences, in spite of all appearances to the contrary.⁴⁷

Yet this way of putting the matter, namely that phenomenology deals with the world and *not* our experience, seems to now underemphasize the role of reflection in phenomenology. For, although one must be wary that phenomenology does not employ introspection, there can be no denying that phenomenology deals with our experience and, accordingly, that some kind of reflection is at play. But to be fair, Overgaard is not altogether denying the reflective character of Husserlian phenomenology, but only claiming that it is reflective “in a less obvious way than one might be tempted to assume.”⁴⁸ What must be emphasized is that what is thematized as a result of reflection is not our experience in separation from the world but, as Overgaard says, “a new relationship with the ‘world.’” This new relationship and the sphere of experience opened up therein is what Husserl refers to as the *transcendental experience* and it must be distinguished from our experience when we speak of it in separation from the world, i.e. *psychic experience*. The fact that many all too easily fail to make this distinction is apparently the driving force behind Overgaard’s somewhat misleading claim that phenomenology deals with the world and not our experience. In order to understand what is really at stake here, we must therefore take pains to clarify the above distinction, and this can only be done by first articulating the distinction between *natural* and *transcendental reflection*. It is to the latter that we shall now turn.

Natural reflection is the kind of reflection employed in the natural attitude. When one reflects in the natural attitude, the reflecting ego “participates” in the “existence-positing” of the world. In looking at a house and reflectively claiming that “I see the house,” I am still living in the belief that the house and I, who is looking at the house, both exist as part of the world. Although this reflection modifies my original experience insofar as my perception is thematized then for the first time, the belief in the existence of the house (and the rest of the world co-given with it) has not been altered by the reflection. Put differently, the reflecting ego maintains the natural attitude. Accordingly, what we discover here are our acts pertaining to a psyche that is part of the psychophysical being in the world. As Husserl says, in natural reflection, one necessarily finds “‘real,’ ‘mundane’ consciousness that is intertwined with nature.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁹ *Hua* VII, p. 267/39.

Transcendental reflection, on the other hand, thematizes consciousness in a completely different manner. Husserl explains in *Cartesian Meditations* (first published in French under the title, *Méditations cartésiennes: Introduction à la phénoménologie*) that while in natural reflection, “we stand on the footing of the world already given as existing, [...] [i]n *transcendental-phenomenological reflection* we deliver ourselves from this footing, by universal *epoché* with respect to the being or nonbeing of the world.”⁵⁰ Instead of living in the belief that the house exists together with the rest of the world, we bracket this belief such that we abstain from making judgments about the existence of the house and the world. The result of this transcendental reflection is *pure transcendental subjectivity*.

But one may here wonder how such bracketing of the world could lead us back to transcendental subjectivity and not to a subjectivity that is purified of everything worldly, i.e. something like a *psyche*. And, furthermore, if this psyche leaves out the world, how can that be the source of world-constitution? To be sure, this brief exposition only outlines the contours of what is required to actually carry out transcendental reflection. Specifically, much more needs to be said about the *transcendental-phenomenological epoché* and *reduction* for it is only by way of these procedures that we are able to employ transcendental reflection. In this regard, these are the fundamental pillars of transcendental reflection. In what follows, let us take a look at what Husserl has to say about them, and specifically how the transcendental reduction differs from what he refers to as the “pure-phenomenological reduction” or “psychological-phenomenological reduction.” Only then will we be able to clarify the key distinction between (pure) transcendental subjectivity or transcendental experience on the one hand and pure psyche or psychic experience on the other.

2.3 Psychological phenomenology vs. transcendental phenomenology

Below, we will be focusing on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article (hereafter, EB article) that was published as an introduction to phenomenology. This article was the result of a failed collaboration with Heidegger written between September and December 1927. Four drafts of the article exist, all of which are important material in that they significantly reflect Husserl’s and Heidegger’s different takes on what constitutes phenomenology. For our purposes here, however, we will not examine Heidegger’s draft and his comments to Husserl’s text but, rather, we will focus on what Husserl had to say and specifically on the first draft, which was written by Husserl alone. This draft proves to be especially relevant for us because

⁵⁰ Hua I, p. 72/34.

the whole discussion is geared towards articulating the close relation that pertains between *psychological phenomenology* and *transcendental phenomenology* and, as a corollary, pure psyche and transcendental subjectivity. Clarifying the difference between these two sciences is of utmost importance in understanding the proper aim and province of transcendental phenomenology.

According to Husserl, these two sciences are like sisters in that they share a basic method: *phenomenological reflection*. Husserl therefore begins his discussion with an exposition of phenomenological reflection and only later gives an exposition of the transcendental reduction, which is decisive in distinguishing the two. Phenomenological reflection is explained as the method that allows us to move away from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude; it transforms the everyday experience of being involved with objects into “phenomenological experience,” the field of experience having an intentional structure:

Instead of living in ‘the’ world directly in the ‘natural attitude’ and, so to speak, like ‘children of this world’ [...] we attempt a universal phenomenological reflection on this entire life-process, be it pre-theoretical, theoretical or whatever.⁵¹

This reflection, moreover, is executed by way of “the basic method for throwing into relief the phenomenological-psychological field,”⁵² i.e. the phenomenological reduction. To recapitulate, the phenomenological reduction is a leading back of the gaze from things out there in the world to the *consciousness of* those things. In perceiving a tree, for example, my gaze moves from the tree itself to my *perception of* it. The ‘of’ here plays an essential role. For even if it turns out that the perception was an illusion, it remains a fact that the perception was a perception *of* something that appeared to be an actual tree. In other words, the intentional structure remains regardless of whether the tree *in fact* exists or not. Accordingly, in order to achieve this reduction to the intentional field, one must first execute the *epoché* to abstain from the position-taking on the perceived.

The phenomenological reduction, furthermore, is coupled by the eidetic reduction and the intersubjective reduction (reduction to pure intersubjectivity), all of which constitute phenomenological reflection. As a result of these procedures, Husserl explains that we are led back to the *pure psyche*. This, furthermore, is the proper realm of pure psychology or pure psychological phenomenology. “Pure” here has a double sense in that it signifies being purified from anything non-psychical *and* it is an a priori science dealing with essences, i.e. it is purified from particularities. Accordingly, pure psychology is said to be analogous to pure a priori physics such as mechanics or geometry (in that they are purified from all

⁵¹ Hua IX, p. 239/85.

⁵² Ibid., p.243/90.

that is non-physical and from particularities). And just as a priori physics provides the foundation for the empirical natural sciences, pure psychology provides the foundation for empirical psychology. Psychological phenomenology (also called phenomenological psychology), which studies the pure psyche in a phenomenological manner, is then the “new science” that is necessary for securing the grounds of empirical psychology.

But phenomenology’s role is not exhausted as an a priori psychological discipline nor does this capture the radicalness and true significance of phenomenology. For psychological phenomenology is not yet transcendental phenomenology and, according to Husserl, it is only as the latter that phenomenology establishes its unprecedented role in the history of philosophy. It is thus important to distinguish the two sciences. As Husserl says, “[b]ecause transcendental and psychological phenomenology have fundamentally different meanings, they must be kept most rigorously distinct.”⁵³ What Husserl means by the two sciences having different meanings is that they serve different purposes. The aim of psychological phenomenology is to articulate the essential structures of the pure psyche and, hence, is “born of a concern for establishing a radically scientific psychology.” As we have seen, psychological phenomenology provides the foundation for empirical psychology and thus secures the scientific rigor of psychology. Transcendental phenomenology, on the other hand, has the aim of “reforming philosophy into a strict science” by articulating the meaning and validity of the world as it is constituted by the functions of consciousness. The difference can also be cashed out in terms of their scope: the transcendental problematic is much broader since its concern is not limited to a specific region, i.e. the psyche, but rather extends to all possible regions. And in that sense, transcendental phenomenology is an a priori science that provides the foundation for *all* sciences, not just psychology.

Despite these differences, however, there is still a strong sense in which the two sciences, psychological and transcendental phenomenology, can still be called sisters. For Husserl tells us that they in fact share the “same” eidetic insights: “one science turns into the other through a mere change in focus, such that the ‘same’ phenomena and eidetic insights occur in both sciences.”⁵⁴ Therefore, it is claimed that “in a certain way purely psychological phenomenology coincides with transcendental phenomenology, proposition for proposition.”⁵⁵ Yet, this is not without an important qualification. The “change in focus” has the effect of changing the meaning of their results fundamentally. This is to say that, while the psychologist and the transcendental phenomenologist share their eidetic insights into the intentional

⁵³ Ibid., p. 247/95.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 247-248/95-96.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 250/98.

structure of consciousness, their *interpretations* of these insights differ substantially such that they end up with completely different understandings of the phenomenological realm that is uncovered:

[W]hat their respective assertions understand by the phenomenologically pure <realm> is, in the one case, *the psychic, a stratum of being within the naturally accepted world*, and, in the other case, *the transcendental-subjective, where the sense and existential validity of the naturally accepted world originate*.⁵⁶

Accordingly, in this particular sense, the eidetic insights are essentially different. But how can their interpretations differ so radically? What does this “change of focus” consist of? It is here that we are introduced to the transcendental reduction:

The objectives of a transcendental philosophy require *a broadened and fully universal phenomenological reduction (the transcendental reduction)* that does justice to the universality of the problem and practices an “*epoché*” regarding the whole world of experience and regarding all the positive cognition and sciences that rest on it, transforming them all into phenomena – transcendental phenomena.⁵⁷

What is interesting here is that the transcendental reduction is introduced as “the broadened and fully universal phenomenological reduction,” thereby suggesting that the transcendental reduction is an extension of the phenomenological reduction and not something radically different. Indeed, this is why the pure psychologist can become a transcendental phenomenologist by executing, what Husserl calls, the “unconditioned *epoché*.”⁵⁸ Or, put the other way around, the transcendental phenomenologist can become a pure psychologist by abstaining from taking this “unconditioned *epoché*” and thereby remaining transcendently naive. But here, one may wonder: Have we not already bracketed, through the phenomenological *epoché*, “the whole world of experience” and “all the positive cognition and sciences that rest on it”? In other words: *what more is there to bracket?*

Before answering this question, let us first look at the reasons Husserl gives for why pure psychology remains transcendently naive. In the first draft, Husserl gives us the following explanation:

Even pure psychology in the phenomenological sense, thematically delimited by the psychological-phenomenological reduction, still is and always will be a positive science: it has the world as its pre-given foundation. The pure psyches and communities of psyches <that it treats> are psyches that

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 250/98 (my italics).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 249/97 (my italics).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 273/128. I take Husserl to be referring to the same thing when he speaks of the “universal *epoché*” elsewhere (Cf. Hua I, p. 72/34; Hua III, §32).

belong to bodies in nature that are presupposed but simply left out of consideration. Like every positive science, this pure psychology is itself transcendently problematic.⁵⁹

Simply put, pure psychology is transcendently naive due to its status as a positive science. Yet it is not entirely clear from this passage what “positive sciences” signify and consequently in what sense pure psychology counts as one of them. Furthermore, it is unclear why pure psychology “has the world as its pre-given foundation” when this was supposedly bracketed through the *epoché*. Admittedly, the second draft is much clearer on these points. I will quote at length since it is an important passage:

Even when doing pure psychology we still stand, as psychologists, on the ground of positivity; we are and remain explorers simply of the world or of a <particular> world, and thus all our research remains transcendently naive. Despite their purity, all pure psychic phenomena have the ontological sense of worldly real facts, even when they are treated eidetically as possible facts of a world which is posited as general possibility but which, for that very reason, is also unintelligible from a transcendental point of view. For the psychologist, who as psychologist remains in positivity, the systematic psychological-phenomenological reduction, with its *epoché* regarding the existing world, is merely a means for reducing the human and animal psyche to its own pure and proper essence, all of this against the backdrop of a world that, as far as the psychologist is concerned, remains continually in being and constantly valid. Precisely for that reason this phenomenological reduction, seen from the transcendental viewpoint, is characterized as inauthentic and transcendently non-genuine.⁶⁰

Here, we learn that “positive sciences” signify sciences that “remain in positivity.” This is to say that positive sciences are those that deal with beings whose existence is *posited*, i.e. presupposed. Pure psychology is a positive science in this sense because, whilst bracketing the existence of the world, the pure psyche itself is nonetheless presupposed *as existing in the world*. And since the positivity of the pure psyche implies belief in the existence of the world, or so the argument goes, pure psychology has presupposed the world despite the appearance to the contrary. Thus, in this regard, “it [pure psychology] has the world as its pre-given foundation.” Through the “psychological-phenomenological reduction,” we are led back to the pure psyche, which is “pure” in the sense of being purified from the non-psychic and particularities but *not* pure in the sense of being freed from all positivity insofar as it presupposes its own positivity (and, as a corollary, the positivity of the world). Therefore, as Husserl asserts, the psychological-phenomenological reduction is “a means for reducing the human and animal psyche to its own pure and proper essence” but only “against the backdrop of a world that, as far as the psychologist is concerned, remains continually in being and constantly valid.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 248-249/96-97.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 272-273/127-128.

Now, if the pure psyche is posited as existing within the world, then this cannot be the ground from which the sense and validity of the world and everything that exists in it originate, namely transcendental subjectivity. This follows insofar as a region amongst other regions within the world simply cannot be the originating or constituting source of the world. Or to put it in terms of ‘positivity,’ all regions within the world, insofar as they are posited beings, cannot be the ground of such positivity. Thus, all sciences that deal with posited beings, namely all positive sciences, cannot be that fundamental science that provides the a priori foundation for all sciences. Accordingly, pure psychology is not a transcendental science since it too, being an a priori *regional* science, is a positive science. If we want to rightly understand the transcendental problematics, we must maintain a strict distinction between the positive sciences and transcendental science and, accordingly, between phenomenological psychology and transcendental phenomenology. Dan Zahavi captures this distinction nicely:

Phenomenological psychology is a form of philosophical psychology which takes the first-person perspective seriously, but which – in contrast to transcendental phenomenology – remains within the natural attitude. The difference between the two is consequently that phenomenological psychology might be described as a *regional-ontological analysis* which investigates consciousness for its own sake. In contrast, transcendental phenomenology is a much more ambitious global enterprise. It is interested in the *constitutive dimension of subjectivity*, that is, it is interested in an investigation of consciousness in so far as consciousness is taken to be a condition of possibility for meaning, truth, validity, and appearance.⁶¹

Let us now go back to our earlier question regarding what more there is to bracket. From the above discussion, we can conclude that it is the *positivity of the psyche* that we must further bracket after the psychological-phenomenological reduction. Or put differently, in order to execute the “unconditioned *epoché*,” we must bracket the positivity of the psyche insofar as that is the last vestige of positivity. What we then have as a consequence is not the pure psyche posited as existing in the world but a consciousness purified from *all* positivity, i.e. transcendently pure consciousness (or ego). As Husserl says:

Thus, as a transcendental phenomenologist, what I have now is not my ego as a psyche – for the very meaning of the world ‘psyche’ presupposes an actual or possible world. Rather, I have that transcendently pure ego within which even this psyche, with its transcendent sense, is endowed, from out of the hidden functions of consciousness, with the sense and validity it has for me.⁶²

And shortly after:

⁶¹ Zahavi 2010, p. 10 (my italics).

⁶² Hua IX, pp. 274-274/129.

It is the transcendental reduction's fundamental and proper character that, from the very beginning and with one blow – by means of an all-inclusive theoretical act of will – it checks this transcendental naivete that still remains as a *residue* in pure psychology.⁶³

It is in this sense, then, that the transcendental reduction is taken to be the “broadened and fully universal phenomenological reduction.”⁶⁴ Husserl also speaks of this universal character of the transcendental reduction in terms of its “all-inclusiveness” (*Universalität*): “The issue of all-inclusiveness belongs to the essential sense of the transcendental problem.”⁶⁵ And:

According to the sense of the transcendental question I as a transcendental phenomenologist place the whole world *entirely and absolutely* within this question. With equal *all-inclusiveness*, therefore, I stop every positive question, every positive judgment, and the whole of natural experience qua pre-accepted valid basis for possible judgments.⁶⁶

As an all-encompassing procedure, the transcendental reduction therefore leads us back to the realm of subjectivity that is rid of all positivity.

2.4 The nature of transcendental subjectivity

At this point, however, a further question arises as to how to make sense of such a non-positable subjectivity. Specifically, how can we proceed to thematize and describe a realm if it is non-positable? In fact, Husserl makes some conflicting claims on this matter. Although on the one hand he pushes for the all-inclusiveness of the transcendental reduction and emphasizes that all positivity must be left behind, he at the same time claims that transcendental subjectivity is “the only one that is positable”:

In fact it is evident that the ego in its <now transcendentially> reduced peculiarity is the only one that is positable [*setzbar*] with all its intentional correlates, and that it therefore offers me the most fundamental and primordial experiential ground for transcendental exploration.⁶⁷

But if Husserl really wants to maintain that transcendental subjectivity is “the only one that is positable,” then it must be clarified how the positivity of transcendental subjectivity is different from that of objects in the world in such a way that justifies its positivity. In what sense could it be said that there *is*

⁶³ Ibid., p. 274/130 (my italics).

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 249/97.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 271/124.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 273/128-129.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 275/131.

a transcendental subjectivity? Here, the issue concerns the *being* of transcendental subjectivity, and it has been pointed out by some commentators that Husserl remains ambiguous on this point. David Carr, for example, has argued that Husserl leaves us with a paradox regarding the very existence of transcendental subjectivity:

On the one hand, Husserl wants to stress the *existence* of the ego in transcendental reflection: "ego sum" provides us with an "apodictically existing basis to stand on." [...] On the other hand, this ego is deprived of any normal sense of existing, that is, being an entity among other entities, existing for an ego as an object within the horizon of the world.⁶⁸

This is also a point that Heidegger pushes Husserl on. In the margins of the above-quoted passage where Husserl states that "the ego in its reduced peculiarity is the only one that is positable," Heidegger writes:

<So it is a> *positum*! Something positive! Or else what kind of *positing* is this? In what sense <can one say> that this *posited-something is* – if it is supposed to be not nothing <but> rather in a certain way everything?⁶⁹

Indeed, this is an important point of dispute between Husserl and Heidegger and one to which we shall return in Part II. But for now, it is sufficient to merely note that Husserl remained somewhat ambiguous on this point and that Heidegger did not fail to see that.

There is, however, another path that one can take that incidentally saves us from falling into a paradox. And it revolves around the issue of whether transcendental subjectivity ought to be posited regardless of what Husserl himself says about the matter. Above, we saw how transcendental subjectivity is revealed through the *epoché* and the transcendental reduction. Seen in this light, it is a kind of residue. Accordingly, up to this point, the characterization of transcendental subjectivity has been rather negative, i.e. as the realm freed from all positivity, or at least from the positivity that pertains to objects in the world. But Husserl also gives a more positive characterization, namely as that wherein objects and the world appear, i.e. the locus of appearance. Or to use a term adopted by many commentators (though not by Husserl), it is the "dative of manifestation."⁷⁰ This is very much a phenomenological characterization since it is derived from the intentional structure of consciousness revealed through phenomenological reflection. What phenomenological reflection clarified was that the world existing independently of consciousness makes no sense and that the only way to understand the world is *as it is intended*. Put

⁶⁸ Carr 1999, pp. 93-94.

⁶⁹ Hua IX, p. 604/131.

⁷⁰ According to Overgaard, the phrase "dative of manifestation" was first coined by Thomas Prufer. Cf. Overgaard 2004, p. 45; Prufer (1988, p. 200).

bluntly, the world is always a world as it appears *for consciousness*. Here again, however, we must be careful not to misidentify this “dative of manifestation” as the pure psyche. For while the pure psyche is that consciousness for which objects and the world appear, it is *also* an object in the world. Transcendental subjectivity, on the other hand, is *never* an object in the world. The distinction between the two notions of subjectivity, and more generally between empirical and transcendental subjectivity, can be cashed out in terms of their relation to the world. And indeed, this is what essentially separates one from the other. Carr has nicely underlined this point:

The key to the difference between transcendental and empirical subjects is to be found not in the internal structures of consciousness – that is, in its relation to itself – but rather in its relation to the world.⁷¹

On the one hand, we have the empirical subject that “relates in both intentional and real-causal ways to the world, but in any case [...] as part to whole.”⁷² In other words, it is a subject for the world but also an object in the world amongst other objects that exist independently of the self. On the other hand, we have the transcendental subject that “relates *purely and exclusively* intentionally to the world, not as part to whole but as subject to object – or rather, as subject to horizon of objects.”⁷³ Here, the subject is *exclusively* a subject for the world. Carr further explains:

Rather than being an object it is the ‘condition of the possibility’ of there being objects at all, and indeed, of there being a world. That is, as subject of its own intentionality, this subject can be seen as the *source*, not, of course, of the existence of the world or the things in it, but of their *meaning*, and indeed their status *as* objects and *as* world for a subject.⁷⁴

But if we characterize transcendental subjectivity as the locus of manifestation that is exclusively a subject for the world, how can we proceed to give further positive descriptions of it? Since it is not an object to which various properties can be attributed, in a certain sense, it lacks content, i.e. it is vacuous:

It is nothing but its intentional relation to the world; its only content is the *intentional* content of its objects. But these are not properties or determinations of the transcendental subject; whether they exist or not, they transcend the subject and its intentions; they are in no way to be considered ‘really inherent parts’ of it.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Carr 1999, p. 90.

⁷² Ibid., p. 90.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 90-91 (my italics).

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 94.

Here, however, an important point is made. Namely, transcendental subjectivity does not altogether lack content, but rather, “its only content is the *intentional* content of its objects.” This is to say that we can turn to the *world* to give us descriptions of transcendental subjectivity. Overgaard underscores this point and argues that we are able to have access to transcendental subjectivity in an *indirect* way via the world. Moreover, not only is this indirect path one possible way to access transcendental subjectivity but it is the *only* way to do so. And as a corollary, he argues that, contrary to what some of Husserl’s words on the matter indicate, the only positing that Husserlian phenomenology needs is that of the world.⁷⁶ In other words, there is no need to posit or presuppose the existence of transcendental subjectivity in order to thematize it phenomenologically insofar as it can be examined indirectly via an examination of the world:

[T]he world cannot constitute itself without doing so *for someone*, and this someone (the one, or ones, to whom the world appears) we define as the *transcendental subjectivity*. The question is whether Husserl could, or should, “posit” this subjectivity as a sphere of being to be directly investigated by phenomenology, and the answer is negative, since transcendental subjectivity as defined seems to have no content besides that of the experienced world. Instead we need to focus once again on the world inside its brackets, to see if this could function as a *guiding clue* to an *indirect* investigation of the initially empty “dative of manifestation.” This indirect approach to transcendental subjectivity, this going back from the world and mundane entities to that for which it constitutes itself, we call the transcendental or phenomenological reduction.⁷⁷

To be sure, one must be careful not to misunderstand his claim that we need to only posit the world and “focus once again on the world inside its brackets” as signifying that he is somehow disregarding the phenomenological *epoché*. Overgaard certainly takes pains to clarify that this is exactly what he is *not* claiming:

Husserl posits nothing less and nothing more than the existing world and all entities belonging to it, but does so in a peculiar manner, viz. he posits the world as *that whose constitution we must understand*.⁷⁸

The difference from the positing that takes place in the natural attitude is that we do not posit the world and the objects within it as existing independently of consciousness, ready to be examined in terms of

⁷⁶ Overgaard notes that he is interested in understanding “what is actually going on in Husserlian phenomenology” and not so much in Husserl’s own interpretation of it. He emphasizes the importance of this distinction by drawing on Gadamer’s claim that an author is generally not the authority of his own work insofar as he becomes a reader of it (and accordingly no more authoritative than other readers). This distinction is all the more emphasized in the context of working with Husserl since, according to Overgaard, Husserl was not the best interpreter of his own works. Cf. Overgaard 2004, p. 49.

⁷⁷ Overgaard 2004, p. 54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

their properties and relations that pertain between them. Rather, we posit the world as the intentional correlate of consciousness and as something that needs to be understood in its constitution. It is in this sense that the world and its objects are taken as “transcendental guiding clues” (*Leitfäden*) for understanding transcendental subjectivity.⁷⁹

Hereto, we have seen two ways of understanding what the transcendental reduction reveals: transcendental subjectivity as “the only one that is positable” and transcendental subjectivity freed from all positivity but gains its content from the world. We have already seen how the former understanding leads to a paradox that calls for further articulation regarding the being of transcendental subjectivity. Does the latter understanding fare better? Admittedly, it does avoid the paradox since we are no longer dealing with two kinds of positivity. This may be good news for the Husserlian who is eager to quickly dismiss Heidegger’s objection to Husserl that he needs to clarify the sense in which transcendental subjectivity ‘is.’ They can simply say that the question does not arise in Husserlian phenomenology and hence is irrelevant since there is no need to posit the existence of transcendental subjectivity. But Overgaard’s suggestion that we only have indirect access to transcendental subjectivity via the examination of the world does not render the question of the being of transcendental subjectivity irrelevant. On the contrary, we can even say that it makes the question all the more relevant in the sense that it allows us to give a Husserlian response to Heidegger’s objection without necessarily getting ourselves tangled up in a metaphysical discussion. For, in arguing that indirect access is necessary *and sufficient* in bringing transcendental subjectivity to phenomenological evidence, Overgaard is suggesting that the way of being of transcendental subjectivity is sufficiently captured by recourse to its relation to the world and objects in the world. Therefore, according to this interpretation, Husserlian phenomenology can and does indeed provide an account of the being of transcendental subjectivity.

Another advantage that this interpretation of transcendental subjectivity has over the other is that it highlights the essential role that the world has for transcendental subjectivity. When the transcendental reduction is understood as the stripping off of the last vestige of positivity that the pure psyche has, this can give the impression that what we have left is a transcendental ego without a world, not so distant from the Cartesian cogito. Indeed, the way in which Husserl introduces transcendental phenomenology in the EB article that we have hereto been looking at, namely by first calling for the need of pure psychology and underlining the similarities it has to transcendental phenomenology, admittedly assists in giving the wrong impression that the world is somehow excluded. But when transcendental subjectivity is understood as the dative of manifestation where its *only* content is the world, then this puts us in a better

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 51.

position to see how the world is an inseparable component of transcendental subjectivity and accordingly, of transcendental phenomenology. In fact, there can be no denying that, transcendental or not, phenomenology never leaves the world out of the picture. Even psychological phenomenology includes the world insofar as the pure psyche has the world (or more precisely, the objects therein) as its intentional correlate. Transcendental phenomenology is no different in this regard – it works with what Husserl calls the “universal a priori correlation” (*Korrelationsapriori*) between the *cogito* and the *cogitatum*.⁸⁰ Hence on the side of the *cogitatum*, it works with the descriptions of the intentional object as it is intended, and these are called the *noematic* descriptions. On the other side of the *cogito*, we have the descriptions of the mode of consciousness, i.e. the *noetic* descriptions. In this way, the *epoché* does not bracket away the world but, rather, rediscovers it in a different light.⁸¹ As Husserl says in the *Cartesian Meditations*:

We now understand that, by our universal *epoché* with respect to the being or non-being of the world, we have not simply lost the world for phenomenology; we retain it, after all, *qua cogitatum*.⁸²

The difference between transcendental and psychological phenomenology is not that the former includes the world while the latter does not, but rather that, in the former, the *cogito-cogitatum* (noetic-noematic) correlation is uncovered in its constitution, i.e. as manifest for transcendental subjectivity.

Let us now summarize Husserl’s view on transcendental reflection. Transcendental reflection differs from what Husserl called natural reflection in the way in which it thematizes our experience. Natural reflection is a bending back of consciousness onto our experience in the natural attitude. This is to

⁸⁰ Hua VI, §46.

⁸¹ There is a huge debate which I did not go into here that concerns the status of the noema and which is sometimes referred to as the noema-discussion. The controversy revolves around the relation between the noema understood as the object-as-it-is-intended and the object-that-is-intended. According to what is called the West Coast, or Fregean, interpretation, most famously maintained by Føllesdal and Dreyfus, the noema is that which mediates our act and object. The noema is here understood as the ideal sense by virtue of which we intend objects. Under this interpretation, the *epoché* brackets the world and objects therein and, accordingly, phenomenology leaves the world out of the picture. Contra this reading, there is the East Coast interpretation propounded by Sokolowski, Drummond, Zahavi and others according to which the noema just *is* the object considered in phenomenological reflection. According to this reading, the *epoché* is not a way to leave the world and objects therein out of the picture and to focus instead on mental representations but, rather, a method to see objects and the world in a different way. In phenomenological reflection, then, the relation between the object-that-is-intended and the object-as-it-is-intended is not seen as an ontic distinction between two entities but rather a reflective or methodological distinction within the structure of the noema. Without attempting a full justification, I will only note what I take to be the most detrimental feature of the former reading, namely that, if we subscribe to the former view, then phenomenology becomes a form of representationalism, a view of the mind that Husserl clearly distanced himself from. For a discussion regarding this debate, see e.g. Zahavi (2003b) and Drummond (1990).

⁸² Hua I, p. 75/36.

say that it thematizes our experience *as psychic experience alongside the physical world*. It does not alter the way we conceive the world since it leaves the world out of the picture. Transcendental reflection, on the other hand, fundamentally changes the way we relate to the world since the world is no longer conceived as existing apart from us but is now the world only insofar as it manifests for consciousness. Moreover, we have seen that the transcendental phenomenologist differs from the psychological phenomenologist in that, while they both employ phenomenological reflection on the intentional structure of consciousness, the latter remains in the natural attitude insofar as he takes the pure psyche to be existing in the world. In order to move into the transcendental attitude, one must effect the “unconditioned *epoché*,” which brackets all positivity and ‘bring us back to’ (Latin: *reducere*) the realm of pure transcendental subjectivity. And as the dative of manifestation, this realm is that “place” wherein the world appears in its constitution. The transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction are thus the specific methods that together constitute transcendental reflection. Put differently, to employ transcendental reflection is simply to execute the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction. Accordingly, we can say that, for Husserl, transcendental reflection thematizes the intentional structures of our experience *as they are constituted in consciousness*. And it is *this* experience and this experience alone that deserves to be called *transcendental experience*. It is radically different from psychic experience insofar as the latter refers to our experience of the world distinguished from the world itself. Transcendental experience, on the other hand, designates our experience of the world *as such* and therefore, it makes no sense to speak of a world outside of this experience.

Chapter 2: The essence of transcendental philosophy

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined Kant and Husserl's respective versions of transcendental philosophy with a view to determining the essence of transcendental philosophy. But the focus was more on how Kant and Husserl understood the transcendental in the context of the specific problematics they were dealing with and less on how their understandings of the transcendental relate to each other. We saw how Husserl understood his transcendental phenomenology to be a development of Kant's, but this does not yet give us a clear idea as to what makes them both transcendental philosophies. Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to articulate the *essence* of transcendental philosophy based on our investigations in the previous chapter. The pressing question is: *In virtue of what characteristics are they variations of transcendental philosophy?* At the end of this chapter, we will be equipped with three criteria of transcendental philosophy.

1. Transcendental reflection and conditions of possibility

First and foremost, for both Kant and Husserl, transcendental philosophy is a *second-order* discipline. This entails that the transcendental must be clearly distinguished from all first-order mode of inquiry. Steven Crowell calls this the "discontinuity thesis," namely the thesis that there is *a radical discontinuity* between philosophy and all first-order cognition, whether empirical or metaphysical.¹ This

¹ Crowell 2013, p. 11. Crowell argues that this discontinuity thesis is maintained by all transcendental philosophers, from Kant and the neo-Kantians to Husserl (and early Heidegger), as he also calls it the "transcendental discontinuity thesis" (p. 18). At first sight, this may run counter to his earlier claim made in his 2001 book. There, he argued that what distinguishes the neo-Kantians' version of transcendental philosophy from transcendental phenomenology is that the former maintains a *continuity* between philosophy and the positive sciences while the latter claims a *discontinuity* (2001, p. 24). While neo-Kantians identified philosophy's task with providing a theory of science (and hence insisted on the continuity with the positive sciences), phenomenologists took their main task to be a clarification of meaning and accordingly insisted on the autonomy of philosophy (and hence insisted on the discontinuity with the positive sciences). But importantly, Crowell was not thereby claiming that, for the neo-Kantians, philosophy provides first-order knowledge claims as the positive sciences do. They are not continuous in that sense. Thus, I believe Crowell's view is consistent throughout insofar as he always maintained that what marks transcendental philosophy is its second-order status. The discontinuity thesis merely follows from this. Namely, it is the thesis that philosophical knowledge is a second-order knowledge and thus distinguished from knowledge gained in the positive sciences, and indeed from all first-order knowledge.

Another point to note in this context is the debate between Crowell and Dan Zahavi concerning the relation between philosophy and the positive sciences. Against Crowell's view that phenomenology understands this relation to be a discontinuous one, Zahavi has argued that Husserl's attitude to this relation is more "conciliatory" (2003c

point is also nicely captured by David Carr when, in the context of discussing Kant and Husserl, he says that “both thinkers conceive of themselves not as producing knowledge about reality or the world, but as reflecting on such knowledge.”² Now, transcendental philosophy secures this discontinuity with the specific kind of reflection it employs, namely *transcendental reflection*. Kant had distinguished transcendental reflection from empirical or psychological reflection. While the latter thematizes our experience with a view to determining its real properties (for example, it thematizes our mind to seek out mental states or properties), transcendental reflection thematizes our experience with a view to determining the a priori subjective conditions of possibility for our cognition of objects. Here, transcendental reflection is a second-order consciousness in the sense that it asks for the underlying conditions of possibility for our experience and not the factual make up of our experience. Accordingly, transcendental reflection abstracts from our experience and seeks the underlying principles that enable us to have these experiences in the first place.

It may not be easy to see how Husserl’s transcendental reflection, consisting of the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction, is a second-order reflection. For the phenomenological method does not abstract from our experience as it never leaves the sphere of experience. Nonetheless, it is also not first-order reflection since it does not thematize our experience in order to determine its real properties. Husserl called this natural reflection, i.e. the kind of reflection employed in the natural attitude. In the natural attitude, we take the existence of objects and the world for granted. And so in natural reflection, we thematize our experience as pertaining to the psychophysical being that exists in the world. But once these assumptions in the natural attitude are bracketed, the intentional structures of our experience can be revealed in full, i.e. in its constitution, as the very ground of meaning. It is then in this sense that we can say that Husserl’s transcendental reflection is second-order, namely, not in the sense that it abstracts from our experience but in the sense that it abstracts from the natural attitude (or our experience interpreted in the natural attitude as mental or psychical). Therefore, employing Kantian

, p. 333; 2004, p. 341). But in light of the above consideration, it is important to understand that the point of disagreement is *not* about the second-order status of transcendental knowledge and, accordingly, the discontinuity thesis. As I understand it, Zahavi’s main motivation for arguing in favor of a more conciliatory reading of the relation between philosophy and the positive sciences (based on Husserl’s as well as Merleau-Ponty’s views on the matter) is not to reduce philosophy to a first-order science but rather to suggest that the two can cooperate with each other and mutually profit by doing so. Accordingly, he does not deny the autonomy of philosophy and, in fact, he stresses that one of the differences between philosophy and the empirical sciences (and I believe this can be extended to all first-order cognition) is that philosophy is a *critical* science (2004, p. 344-345). Therefore, although Zahavi challenges the traditional boundary between the transcendental and the empirical, I do not think he would go so far as to deny the discontinuity thesis which secures the specific status of philosophical knowledge.

² Carr 1999, p. 101.

language, we can say that, for both Kant and Husserl, transcendental reflection is a second-order reflection that thematizes *the conditions of possibility* for our cognition of objects or, more generally, our experience of the world.

At this point, however, it is also worth pointing out the way in which Husserl's phenomenological rendering widens the scope of transcendental philosophy as it was developed by Kant. The difference is evident if we compare the basic transcendental questions they were interested in. Kant was interested in the specific question: *How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?* Husserl's question, in contrast, was: *How does meaning manifest in consciousness?* Husserl's interest was not limited to synthetic a priori knowledge and the problem of cognition but was more generally geared towards our experience of objects and the structures of intentional consciousness. And in this way, phenomenology widened the scope to encompass our experience in general. As Crowell confirms:

[P]henomenology accomplishes a universal generalization of the transcendental turn: inquiry into the (normative) conditions for the possibility of knowledge becomes an inquiry into *intentionality* or "mental content" as such: our experience of something *as* something.³

In the same context, Crowell argues that phenomenology is transcendental insofar as it makes meaning (what he identifies with the as-structure of our experience of objects) thematic.⁴ It is important to note that by "meaning", Crowell does not have in mind something through which we intend objects, e.g. mental content. The double quotation marks around mental content in the quotation attest to his taking distance from any kind of representationalist understanding of phenomenology. Put differently, he is not saying that phenomenology thematizes *merely* meaning, leaving the world out of the picture. Rather: "[m]eaning is the thing as it presents itself to phenomenological reflection."⁵

Nonetheless, one may worry that making meaning thematic in the above proper phenomenological sense still does not sufficiently capture the *transcendental* character of phenomenology. For was it not the inquiry into the *ground* of meaning and accordingly into the constitutive dimensions of consciousness that marks Husserl's transcendental turn? Put differently, can we not thematize meaning without necessarily engaging in a transcendental problematic? I believe Crowell would reply by saying that making meaning thematic is necessarily to delve into transcendental problematics since questioning the meaning of something is precisely to question how the thing appears *to me*, i.e. how consciousness constitutes the thing as such. I would agree but, to highlight this point more explicitly, I would stress that

³ Crowell 2013, p. 10.

⁴ Ibid., ibid.

⁵ Crowell 2001, p. 89.

transcendental phenomenology is specifically interested in the *conditions of possibility for* intentionality and meaning (and not just intentionality or meaning, as Crowell says). In other words, I want to stress that what marks Kant's and Husserl's transcendental inquiries is that they are both second-order inquiries into the conditions of possibility. Indeed, that this is more a matter of emphasis than of dispute is clear as in the quotation below:

The transcendental reduction [...] allows phenomenology to study the intentional constitution of things – that is, the conditions that make possible not the existence of entities in the world (the issue of existence has been bracketed), but their *meaning as* existing, and indeed their being given as anything at all.⁶

2. Alteration of our relation to the world

Accordingly, we can say that the second-order search for “conditions of possibility” is a defining marker of transcendental philosophy. But this does not yet sufficiently capture the essence of transcendental philosophy as it was developed by Kant and Husserl. For what is crucial in transcendental philosophy is that its search for conditions of possibility is coupled by the *alteration of our relation to the world*. Put differently, transcendental inquiry has distinct metaphysical implications. In the context of evaluating the epistemological and ontological readings of the transcendental in Kant, we saw that the a priori subjective conditions of possibility of our experience are not merely what constitute our experience but also *the ontological constitution of objects*. This entails two things. On the one hand, this means that transcendental inquiry is not merely epistemological in the sense that it has no bearing on ontology but has significant ontological implications. On the other hand, insofar as these conditions are *subjective* conditions of the mind, it implies that *we*, as transcendental subjects, are responsible for what objects are, at least partly. This is the core of Kant's Copernican revolution. Our mind does not represent objects independently existing in themselves but, rather, our mind's activity is essential to what objects are, i.e. they constitute objects as objects. As Kant tells us:

The order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle nature, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of our mind, originally set them there. (A125)

⁶ Crowell 2013, p. 47.

As a consequence, our relation to the world is radically altered in the sense that we are no longer mirrors of the world (that represent objects either rightly or wrongly) but constituting subjects for the world. Lee Braver has identified this as the central feature of Kant's revolution and has called it the "Active Knower thesis": "[t]he center of Kant's revolution is [...the] Active Knower [thesis] – the thesis that the mind actively organizes and constitutes experience; it is more like a factory than wax or a mirror."⁷

As we have already seen, Husserl understood Kant's revolution to consist in the turn "from the naive positive stage of world-cognition to a world-cognition through ultimate self-consciousness of cognition."⁸ And he defined transcendental philosophy as "a philosophy which [...] goes back to knowing subjectivity as the primal locus of all objective formations of sense and ontic validities."⁹ Husserl's transcendental phenomenology no doubt follows this Kantian revolution and the turn to transcendental subjectivity as the source of sense and validity. But not only does Husserl follow Kant, his phenomenological rendering goes further than Kant in that it clarifies the sense in which our relation to the world changes. This is evident in how elaborate Husserl's version of transcendental reflection, consisting of the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction, was in comparison to Kant's. These methods and the entire matter of changing of "attitudes" gives us the concrete tools to arrive at the structures of transcendental subjectivity. And importantly, the world was not at all lost in this process. On the contrary, the world was rediscovered as the horizon of intentional correlates, i.e. as meaningful. Transcendental phenomenology, therefore, follows and furthers Kant's revolution insofar as it transforms our relation to the world from our experience of the world as existing independently of us to the experience of the world as meaningfully manifesting in and constituted through consciousness. Husserl says in the *Cartesian Meditations*:

The objective world, the world that exists for me, that always has and always will exist for me [...] derives its whole sense and its existential status, which it has for me, from me myself, from me as the transcendental ego.¹⁰

As we emphasized in the previous chapter, *transcendental experience* leaves nothing out in the sense that it designates our experience of the world as such. In this way, the search for the conditions of possibility for our experience of the world is, at once, the search for the conditions of possibility for the world.

⁷ Braver 2007, p. 36.

⁸ Hua VII, p. 286/55.

⁹ Hua VI, p.102/99.

¹⁰ Hua I, p. 65/26.

This brings us to reflect on an important aspect of transcendental philosophy that I have not expanded on, namely *transcendental idealism*. Both Kant and Husserl characterize their positions as transcendental idealism, and this is probably the most misinterpreted aspect of their thought. A typical misunderstanding comes from taking this as just another metaphysical position juxtaposed to traditional forms of idealism and realism. As we have been emphasizing, however, transcendental philosophy is a second-order discipline and so, by its very nature, it cannot be identified with any first-order position including metaphysical positions that are concerned with objects in a straightforward manner (i.e. whether objects exist independently of us). As Crowell claims:

What Henry Allison says of Kant's position holds equally of Husserl's, namely, that "transcendental idealism must be characterized primarily as a meta-philosophical or methodological 'standpoint,' rather than as a straightforwardly metaphysical doctrine about the nature or ontological status of the objects of human cognition."¹¹

David Carr makes the same point that transcendental philosophy is not itself metaphysics but rather a *method*, though, he says, metaphysics is certainly at issue.¹² What he means by the latter is that transcendental philosophy is concerned with the *critique* of metaphysics. In Kant's own words, the kind of inquiry he was engaged in "should be entitled not a doctrine, but only a transcendental critique" (A12/B26). As a critique, "their [Kant's and Husserl's] approach to it [metaphysics] is not to contribute further to it but to reflect critically on its origins."¹³ Therefore, as a meta-philosophical position or critique, transcendental idealism cannot be identified with either plain idealism or realism nor can it be thought of as an alternative metaphysical position.

Carr's suggestion to understand transcendental philosophy as a method also helps to clarify a misunderstanding about what transcendental philosophy is concerned with. Neither Kant nor Husserl is suggesting that we replace the thing-in-itself or the object-that-is-intended with the subject-matter of transcendental philosophy, namely appearance or the object-as-it-is-intended. Such a reductionist account would turn transcendental philosophy into some kind of subjective idealism. But one might be tempted to say that this is just what Husserl is doing insofar as the noema *is* the object-that-is-intended in phenomenological reflection. However, what is important here is the latter qualification, '*in phenomenological reflection*.' Namely, this is a claim made in the reflective stance of the phenomenological attitude and, therefore, it must be distinguished from a first-order claim. Put differently, insofar as

¹¹ Crowell 2001, p. 236. The quotation from Henry Allison is from *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 25.

¹² Carr 1999, p. 108-110.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

transcendental philosophy is a method and not itself a metaphysical doctrine, the noema cannot be understood as just another entity.

Now, insofar as transcendental philosophy is a reflective method that does not concern itself with the existence or non-existence of objects, Carr goes on to say that transcendental philosophy taken as a method is *metaphysically neutral*: “[w]hat we are attributing to Husserl and Kant, as the genuine sense of transcendental philosophy, is the idea of a philosophical method that is metaphysically neutral.”¹⁴ Here, however, we should be careful not to understand Carr as saying that transcendental philosophy has no metaphysical implications. It is one thing to say that the method is metaphysically neutral and quite another thing to claim that the implications of carrying out the method are metaphysically neutral. This point is underlined by Dan Zahavi with reference to Husserl when he says, “although Husserl's epoché suspends unjustified metaphysical assumptions, his phenomenology does not lack metaphysical implications altogether.”¹⁵ In other words, although the method of transcendental phenomenology is metaphysically neutral in the sense that it neither assumes a first-order metaphysical position nor attempts to provide such a position, this is not to say that it is thereby compatible with any kind of metaphysical position. For example, transcendental phenomenology certainly rules out representationalist views that would reintroduce a two-world theory with a world as it appears to us and a world independently existing apart from us.¹⁶

Let us now tie this discussion back to the point I emphasized earlier, namely that it is part and parcel of transcendental philosophy that its search for the conditions of possibility for our experience is coupled with an *alteration of our relation to the world*. How should we make sense of this in light of what we said about transcendental philosophy being a method and transcendental idealism, a methodological standpoint? First of all, we have to stress that this alteration of our relation to the world does not entail a metaphysical position in itself (insofar as this is understood as a first-order position) since transcendental philosophy is a second-order discipline. Rather, we can understand this alteration as a kind of reflective, methodological stance. Secondly, this alteration of our relation to the world highlights one of the important metaphysical implications of transcendental philosophy, namely *anti-realism*. By realism, I mean naive realism, i.e. the naive view of the world as existing independently of us. Insofar as the metaphysical implications of transcendental philosophy undermine this view, transcendental idealism can

¹⁴ Carr 1999, p. 112.

¹⁵ Zahavi 2003b, p. 61.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid., pp. 61-63.

be negatively characterized as an anti-(naive-)realist position.¹⁷ Yet it must be stressed that this anti-realism does not entail idealism since it is equally anti-idealism. The only reason why I have exclusively focused on anti-realism as the metaphysical implication of transcendental philosophy is because realism, or naive realism, is our default way of understanding the world and as such, it underlies our everyday way of relating to the world. Accordingly, this negative characterization is important insofar as it prohibits our natural way of relating to the world. However, I believe that we can also provide a more positive description of transcendental idealism, namely that it entails a specific priority of transcendental subjectivity over objects and the world. And this brings us to the third point, namely that transcendental philosophy alters our relation to the world in the sense that it gives transcendental subjectivity a privileged role. Accordingly, we come to see the world through transcendental subjectivity. We will return to this point towards the end of this chapter.

3. Transcendental foundationalism

Above, we pointed out that it is the search for conditions of possibility (coupled with its employment of transcendental reflection) and the consequent alteration of our relation to the world that marks transcendental philosophy as developed by Kant and Husserl. There is, however, another important feature that I have left unattended to that is equally crucial for understanding the essence of transcendental philosophy, namely, its *foundationalist* character. Though closely related to the two points raised above, it deserves consideration on its own since the topic of foundationalism raises several issues.

In his 1985 book *The Possibility of Transcendental Philosophy*, J. N. Mohanty provides a characterization of transcendental philosophy that focuses on the notion of foundation. Indeed, the common motif of transcendental philosophies, according to Mohanty, is the search for a foundation for knowledge, thinking and experience. But since, he says, “not every foundationalism is transcendental philosophy,” he settles for the following characterization:

[T]ranscendental philosophy looks for the foundation in the *a priori* structures of the experiencing subject, leaving aside for the present how precisely this subject is to be understood.¹⁸

Immediately, we can extract two important points: transcendental philosophy is a *foundationalist* mode of discipline, and the foundation is sought in the *a priori structures of subjectivity*. Now, characterizing

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁸ Mohanty 1985, p. 214.

transcendental philosophy as foundationalist comes at a price insofar as it puts it into a category together with many other strands of philosophy that it must not be identified with. This also makes it potentially vulnerable to critiques put forward by supporters of anti-foundationalism, specifically to those of post-modernists. Nonetheless, there can be no denying that foundationalism of a certain kind is a defining character of transcendental philosophy. Therefore, the challenge is to clarify the uniqueness of what can be called “transcendental foundationalism” (a term I borrow from John Drummond) in contradistinction to other kinds of foundationalism preceding Kant. In the following, I will take up this challenge with the prospect that this will further help us understand the essence of transcendental philosophy.

Foundationalism in the most general sense can be understood as a term that refers to philosophy’s search for a first principle (or first principles) that serves as the basis for reality as such. Taken in this broadest sense, foundationalism refers not so much to a specific strand within philosophy as to that which marks philosophy as a distinct discipline in contrast to other disciplines. Transcendental philosophy shares this aspiration for a first principle and the consequent conviction that philosophy is a foundational science, i.e. that philosophical knowledge has a special status *vis-à-vis* knowledge acquired in the other sciences insofar as it provides the foundation for other knowledge. Yet transcendental foundationalism is distinct in that it takes a unique approach to seeking this foundation and this in turn gives rise to a rather different idea of foundation from how it is understood in other forms of philosophical foundationalism. For our purposes, let us contrast it with two other kinds of foundationalism. By doing so, we will be able to arrive at the unambiguous sense in which transcendental philosophy can be called a foundationalist discipline.

The first kind seeks indubitable basic truths that serve as self-evident first principles or axioms from which all other knowledge can be derived. All other knowledge can thus be derived from and reduced to these founding truths. We can call this *epistemological foundationalism*. Drummond has distinguished empiricistic and rationalistic foundationalism as two kinds of epistemological foundationalism.¹⁹ The former identifies bedrock truths with incorrigible immediate sensory experiences whereas the latter takes non-empirical certain truths as the foundation for all other knowledge. Cartesian foundationalism is a typical case of the latter since *cogito sum* is a non-empirical truth gained by the alleged clear and distinct perception that serves as the basis for all other knowledge.

The second kind of foundationalism seeks not so much the foundation for our knowledge as the metaphysical ground from which all reality can be derived. We can call this *metaphysical foundationalism*. While epistemological foundationalism may entail metaphysical foundationalism insofar as self-evident

¹⁹ Cf. Drummond (1988 and 1991).

principles may serve as basic building blocks not only of our knowledge but of reality as such, what is specific to metaphysical foundationalism (and not all epistemological foundationalism with metaphysical implications shares this feature) is that it seeks the ground in some kind of metaphysical principle, e.g. God, substance, Plato's ideas. Accordingly, metaphysical foundationalism is interested in offering a metaphysical explanation of reality and the metaphysical principle serves as the ultimate *explanans*.

Frederick Beiser takes into account what we have identified here as Cartesian foundationalism and argues that Kant's transcendental deduction and, more generally, his transcendental project in the *Critique* is not foundationalist in this sense:

One can interpret the Transcendental Deduction of the first *Kritik* as a form of foundationalism, since it *appears* to begin with the self-evidence of the 'I think' and then to derive the application of the categories to experience. Yet this interpretation has been hotly contested; and even if it were vindicated, it is false that the Transcendental Deduction is part of a general foundationalist program.²⁰

Beiser is correct to say that, despite certain similarities between the Cartesian *cogito* and the Kantian 'I think,' Kant's transcendental project cannot be identified with Cartesian foundationalism. Doing so would simply undermine Kant's contribution insofar as the significance of Kant's transcendental philosophy lies in offering a different approach to the old problems of philosophy. Namely, Kant was not interested in finding the self-evident basic truth or metaphysical ground from which everything else can be derived. But while Beiser goes on to infer that Kant's transcendental project is therefore non-foundational, this conclusion must not be immediately accepted. For although Kant may not be a Cartesian foundationalist, there are good reasons to claim that he is a foundationalist in a different sense, as I will argue in the following.

Kant's inquiry into the conditions of possibility for synthetic a priori knowledge can be understood as the search for the theoretical *grounds* or *foundation* of such knowledge. Even Beiser, I suspect, would admit to just this. The question is: If this entails foundationalism, and we both acknowledge that it must be distinguished from various forms of foundationalism before Kant, including what we have identified as epistemological and metaphysical foundationalism, then what is the form of foundationalism specific to transcendental inquiry? In the following, let us focus on the relation between transcendental conditions

²⁰ Beiser 2002, p. 7. Beiser's criticism of the foundationalist interpretation of Kant's first *Critique* appears in his general refutation of the interpretation of German idealism as a revival of Cartesian foundationalism. As long as we keep "transcendental foundationalism" distinct from Cartesian foundationalism and define the former in the way outlined here, I believe our claim that Kant is a transcendental foundationalist can be aligned with Beiser's general argument.

and that which is conditioned by these conditions and frame the question in the following way: *In what way could it be said that transcendental conditions are the “foundations” of the conditioned?*

3.1. Drummond on transcendental foundationalism

Let us begin with John Drummond’s distinction between what he calls transcendental foundationalism and epistemological foundationalism. In his 1991 article, “Phenomenology and the Foundationalism Debate,” he states that, according to transcendental foundationalism, “the foundational beliefs are legitimating beliefs about classes of experience rather than beliefs about the experienced world which function as premises in justificatory arguments.”²¹ Drummond is here working with a distinction between “legitimation” and “justification” and, as a corollary, between legitimating and justificatory foundationalism. This distinction, however, is so subtle that it is not at all clear, at least on its own, where the difference lies. But what presumably clarifies matters is that this distinction is coupled with another set of distinctions, namely between “classes of experience” and “experienced world.” Taking this into consideration, we can reformulate Drummond’s statement in the following way: Whereas *epistemological* or *justificatory foundationalism* is concerned with providing foundational beliefs that serve as premises in “justifying” first-order knowledge claims about our experienced world, *transcendental* or *legitimizing foundationalism* is interested in providing foundational beliefs that “legitimate” experience in general.

Admittedly, this formulation is not much clearer than the original, but I believe it does go some way in clarifying an important aspect of transcendental philosophy that Drummond seems to be highlighting, namely its distance from all first-order inquiries. For what he seems to be getting at is that, on the one hand, we have basic self-evident truths from which the truths of first-order beliefs are derived. On the other hand, we have transcendental conditions that have no say about the specific content of first-order truth claims. Accordingly, transcendental foundationalism “views philosophy as a foundational discipline not because non-philosophical truths are inferentially justified by appeal to philosophical premises but because philosophical truths are *about* other kinds of experience or knowledge.”²² Put differently, philosophical truths in transcendental discourse are not first-order but *second-order* truths about our experience and knowledge. Drummond thus claims that this kind of foundationalism in

²¹ Drummond 1991, p. 58.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

transcendental philosophy is a “position arising out of metaphilosophical concerns regarding the relation of philosophy to non-philosophical experience.”²³

According to Drummond, Kant’s transcendental philosophy typifies transcendental foundationalism insofar as Kant does not attempt to provide foundational beliefs that serve as premises in justificatory arguments for particular empirical beliefs but, rather, proceeds by taking specific content of our experience (provided by Newtonian physics) and indirectly arguing for the transcendental principles that underlie that content. Therefore, Drummond claims that “[h]e [Kant] is concerned solely to legitimate the categories operative in it [truths of Newtonian physics] by grounding them transcendently.”²⁴ Again, Drummond appeals to his distinction between justification and legitimation and consequently denies that Kant is interested in the former. This is confusing, to say the least, insofar as Kant himself had identified his concern with the *quid juris*, i.e. the justification of our beliefs about the world, and not *quid facti*, i.e. how the world in fact is. Admittedly, Drummond is not denying that Kant is interested in *quid juris* as opposed to *quid facti* but only denying that Kant’s interest lies in justifying *first-order beliefs about the world*. Nonetheless, considering the obvious misunderstandings they could elicit, it is difficult to understand why Drummond needs to resort to these terms.

There is, however, a more serious worry about Drummond’s appeal to the justification-legitimation distinction which has to do with the way Husserlian phenomenology fit into the picture. According to Drummond, phenomenology is different from the Kantian approach in that, rather than proceeding *indirectly* from the content of our experience to the transcendental conditions, it proceeds *directly* by identifying and describing the formal structures of intentionality. To be sure, even for Husserl, there is a sense in which he proceeds indirectly from our intentional experience to the conditions of possibility for our experience. As we have seen earlier, although Husserl does not abstract from our experience, the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction were a way of abstracting from the natural attitude. Put differently, insofar as transcendental reflection is a *second-order* consciousness, there is a certain “indirectness” to the whole approach.

Nonetheless, Drummond is right in pointing out that what is distinct in the phenomenological method is that the transcendental conditions are not indirectly inferred by transcendental arguments but rather directly intuited. This is not to say that phenomenology does not employ transcendental arguments at all but only that, when they are employed, there is an appeal to intuitive givenness at every step of the argument: “the premises of such arguments are not formed in the abstract; they are formed in an

²³ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

intentional encounter with the world.”²⁵ As Husserl had said, the phenomenological method is different from the Kantian method in that, whereas the latter is a “constructively inferring [*schliessende*] method,” the former is a “thoroughly intuitively disclosing [*erschliessende*] method” that is “intuitive in its point of departure and in everything it discloses.”²⁶ According to Drummond, it is this appeal to the intuitive givenness of intentional experience and the specific kind of evidence it provides that makes phenomenology *non-foundationalist*. Drummond acknowledges that phenomenological findings gain their apodicticity thanks to Husserl’s method of imaginative variation, which guarantees their *indubitability*, a criterion we seek for in a proper foundation. But, in phenomenology, indubitability does not entail infallibility and incorrigibility. For not only are phenomenological findings always open to revision by further investigation but, also, “our perceptions are themselves associationally informed by judgments previously made both by ourselves and by others whose judgments are in various educational practices handed down to us as culture, as the inherited wisdom of the ages, as common knowledge, and so forth.”²⁷ Accordingly, it is claimed that phenomenologists cannot identify any “ultimately foundational experiences”:

There are no ultimately foundational experiences (say, perceptions) which are not subject to further clarification and emendation by those very experiences (e.g. judgments) which are originally founded upon the candidates for ultimately founding experiences (the perception). Hence, foundations present themselves in the form of a hermeneutic circle [...]. Our experiences, in other words, have *founding* moments reciprocally related to one another but no *foundational* moments.²⁸

Therefore, since the transcendental conditions that phenomenology uncovers are liable to revision, and hence are neither infallible nor incorrigible, they cannot properly be said to *legitimate* our beliefs about the world (since infallibility and incorrigibility are apparently necessary conditions for legitimating beliefs). For this reason, despite its being transcendental and achieving apodictic insight into experience, phenomenology is, Drummond concludes, a non-foundationalist discipline.

Now, granting that phenomenology does indeed fail to provide “legitimizing beliefs about classes of experience,” does this immediately make it non-foundationalist? I think not. What is problematic in Drummond’s argument is that he works with the questionable assumption that the only kind of foundationalism involved in transcendental philosophy is of the legitimating sort. So long as one works with this narrow characterization of transcendental foundationalism, it may be inevitable to conclude that

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²⁶ Hua VI, p. 118/115-116.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

phenomenology is non-foundational. But why should one maintain that the foundationalism specific to transcendental philosophy is of one sort, namely the legitimating sort?

Mohanty seems to allow for different kinds of foundationalism in transcendental philosophy by attending to the nature of Kantian and phenomenological inquiries. What distinguishes them, according to Mohanty, is not that one is foundational and the other not but what it is they are seeking the foundation for. Mohanty cashes out the difference by distinguishing between *truth* and *meaning*:

The contrast is between the conditions of the possibility of truths (of a certain sort) about the world and the conditions of the possibility of meanings, or, what amounts to the same, of modes of interpretation. The first is the Kantian, the second the phenomenological enterprise.²⁹

Put this way, we can see that there is a specific sense in which phenomenology is foundational: It seeks the foundation for meaning and not truth, or at least not directly. The latter qualification must be added since, in seeking the foundation for meaning, phenomenology is also seeking the foundation for truth. For, as Mohanty points out, the concept of truth is founded on the concept of meaning (and hence, the phenomenological enterprise is more fundamental than the Kantian).³⁰ This distinction further points to the essential difference between the Kantian and phenomenological transcendental philosophies. On the one hand, Kantian transcendental philosophy is concerned with justifying an existing body of truths and, therefore, seeks a priori principles through a kind of argument. Transcendental phenomenology, on the other hand, is interested in clarifying the structure of meaning by appealing to the intuitive givenness of our experience, i.e. to “evidence.” Mohanty accordingly calls the former, “*prinzipien-theoretisch*,” and the latter, “*evidenz-theoretisch*,” transcendental philosophy.³¹

Now, although Mohanty’s distinction between the *prinzipien-* and *evidenz-theoretisch* illuminates the difference between Kantian and phenomenological transcendental philosophy, admittedly, it does not take us very far in clarifying the specific sense in which transcendental foundationalism differs from other kinds of foundationalist approaches. To be sure, Mohanty does note that “[f]oundationalism, as such,

²⁹ Mohanty 1985, p. 214.

³⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 214. We can understand the way in which, from a phenomenological perspective, the concept of truth is founded on the concept of meaning by looking at the following example. Let us suppose that we want to ask whether it is true that the cup is currently on the table. In order to ask this question, I must first ask what it *means* for there to be a cup on the table at that moment. This may entail that I see it from a certain angle and that this perception entails the other side of the cup, which my subsequent perception can confirm. All of these are conditions of possibility for there to be a cup on the table at that moment. Accordingly, only upon clarifying the meaning of this proposition can I then ask whether these conditions are fulfilled or not, namely whether it is true or not.

³¹ Mohanty 1985, pp. 214-215.

cannot constitute transcendental thinking”³² and briefly rules out the foundationalism of the logical empiricists, which takes basic protocol sentences as the edifice of knowledge and other metaphysical attempts. He then quickly goes on to say that the foundationalism at play in transcendental philosophy is unique insofar as it seeks for *a priori conditions of possibility*. Certainly, it is clear by now that we are in no disagreement on this point. Nonetheless, in the current context, one could question the validity of grouping the two approaches together when they differ so much in what they are seeking to provide the foundation for and the methods they accordingly employ. Indeed, much of Drummond’s rationale for claiming that Husserlian phenomenology is non-foundational was drawn from its apparent deviation from Kant. Accordingly, seen from Drummond’s perspective, Mohanty’s characterization of transcendental foundationalism is too broad and it does not do justice to the way in which Husserlian phenomenology moves away from the Kantian approach. Yet, from Mohanty’s perspective, Drummond’s denial that Husserlian phenomenology is foundationalist simply undermines the core of transcendental philosophy and, for this reason, he cannot account for why Husserlian phenomenology is nonetheless transcendental. Giving up the foundationalist enterprise is tantamount to giving up the ideal of transcendental philosophy, or so Mohanty would argue.

The point of controversy, then, ultimately comes down to how we define transcendental foundationalism and whether we want to include foundationalism, of a certain kind, as a necessary aspect of transcendental philosophy. Putting aside the problem of how we should define transcendental foundationalism, I agree with Mohanty that, as I have been suggesting, foundationalism is indeed a defining feature of transcendental philosophy. Kant had identified philosophy’s task in providing the foundation for the other sciences, and Husserl was certainly following Kant in this respect. And indeed, Husserl’s designation of phenomenology as “first philosophy”, not as metaphysics in Aristotle’s original sense or as epistemology as the neo-Kantian had it, but as “a philosophy of beginnings instituting itself in the most radical philosophical self-consciousness”³³ clearly indicates that he saw phenomenology as a foundational science. At the same time, however, there can be no denying that Husserl’s phenomenological approach modified many aspects of Kantian transcendental philosophy. In this regard, then, the reasons that led Drummond to conclude that Husserlian phenomenology is non-foundational also cannot be ignored.

Zahavi has also been reluctant to call Husserl a foundationist for similar reasons to Drummond’s. For one thing, phenomenological findings are inconclusive and, for Husserl, “the full and conclusive truth

³² Ibid., p. 213.

³³ Hua VII, p. 6.

about the transcendental dimension is a regulative ideal.”³⁴ Secondly, the phenomenological method is non-deductive: “Husserl explicitly distances himself from the axiomatic and deductive ideal of method that rationalistic foundationalism has normally been committed to.”³⁵ Rephrasing this second point, Zahavi goes on to say that “the truths that transcendental phenomenology might uncover does not make up a foundation that the contents of the positive sciences could be deduced from.”³⁶ This last point was also underlined by Drummond when he suggested that transcendental conditions differ from the basic building blocks in epistemological foundationalism insofar as the truths of first-order beliefs cannot be derived from them. In other words, they have no say about the content of first-order truths. Transcendental conditions, therefore, cannot determine the truth and falsity of particular first-order truths. But granting this, what *positive* characterization can we give transcendental conditions? What *do* these transcendental conditions articulate? To phrase it differently, what is the aim of transcendental inquiry in its search for the “conditions of possibility” for our experience and knowledge of objects? It is to this question that we now turn in order to unravel the exact sense in which transcendental foundationalism differs from other kinds of foundationalism. What proves to be crucial is the kind of reasoning that transcendental inquiry is concerned with.

3.2. The hermeneutical nature of transcendental inquiry

At this point, it is helpful to turn to a distinction made by Jeff Malpas between two modes of reasoning, or ways of grounding, a distinction originally made by Heidegger in the Introduction to *Being and Time*. In Heidegger’s words, it is a distinction between “grounding something by derivation” and “laying bare the grounds and exhibiting them.”³⁷ The former is a mode of reasoning that attempts to deliver proofs by way of deriving truths from axioms or basic truths. The latter, on the other hand, is a kind of reasoning that does not aim at proving as such but, rather, pursues a unified understanding of the whole by way of articulating its basic structures. Admittedly, proving that something is the case can also contribute to understanding the unified whole, but not all attempts at the latter take the form of proofs.

³⁴ Zahavi 2003b, p. 67.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 67. I should note that, while Zahavi provides similar reasons to Drummond’s, he does not thereby conclude that phenomenology is non-foundational. Rather, his claim is that we should be wary of calling Husserl a foundationalist due to his divergence from more traditional forms of foundationalism. I certainly share his worry, but I believe that, so long as we clarify misunderstandings and explain the positive sense in which transcendental phenomenology is foundational, we can continue to call Husserl a foundationalist.

³⁷ SZ, p. 8/28.

What is decisive about the latter mode of reasoning is that the articulation is achieved by reference to nothing outside of and independent of that which it is trying to articulate. In other words, the articulation is brought about from within and not without. In this regard, the latter mode of reasoning operates in a kind of circularity. Since proofs are the sort of things that can only be achieved by reference to something that lies outside what they are trying to prove (which is why circular reasoning is the enemy of proofs), the latter kind of reasoning cannot be said to deliver proofs, strictly speaking.

Malpas argues that transcendental arguments, and more generally transcendental inquiry, belong to this latter mode of reasoning. And this is so because transcendental arguments are, by their nature, circular. In other words, this circularity does not pose a problem for transcendental inquiry but, rather, constitutes the essential structure of transcendental philosophy.³⁸ Furthermore, transcendental inquiry is essentially circular because it exemplifies a general circularity involved in our understanding, i.e. the hermeneutical circle:

Transcendental inquiry operates always from within experience and by appeal to experience. It does not and cannot move to ground the foundational principles or structures it uncovers independently of experience, knowledge or being-in-the-world. Neither is there any independent or presuppositionless starting point for such inquiry. In this respect [...] transcendental inquiry exhibits a 'circularity' identical to the circularity of interpretation.³⁹

This way of understanding the nature of transcendental inquiry fits well with our earlier observation that the truth and falsity of first-order beliefs cannot be derived from transcendental conditions. What this implies is that transcendental conditions cannot prove first-order beliefs. This is not a problem for transcendental inquiry, however, because it is simply not interested in delivering proofs. It is rather interested in articulating the basic structures of experience from within experience. *Transcendental conditions, therefore, are these articulated basic structures of our experience.*

But one may immediately question, as Malpas himself does, whether this really is the case for Kant. How could we say that Kant was not interested in delivering proofs when Kant himself speaks of transcendental proofs throughout the *Critique*? First of all, we must note that, in order to prove something, one must acknowledge that such proof is wanting and that there is a need for such proof. This is a point that Heidegger discusses in *Being and Time* in the context of arguing for the impossibility of proving that Dasein is being-in-the-world. Attempts to prove this are doomed to fail because, in order to attempt such proof, Dasein must already be in the world. Equally untenable are attempts to disprove this since they

³⁸ Cf. Malpas 1997.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

presuppose the opposite, namely that Dasein is in the world. The very demand for such attempts comes from simply misunderstanding the being of the entity that is said to be doing the demanding. Therefore, Heidegger says: “[i]f Dasein is understood correctly, it defies such proofs, because, in its Being, it already is what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it.”⁴⁰

Similarly, Kant was not interested in proving the existence of the world since that would entail that he accepted the way of ideas or a similar view of the way we relate to the world. In this sense, Kant’s transcendental inquiry is not an attempt to prove the existence of the world. But it would also be wrong, strictly speaking, to say that Kant attempted to prove the objective validity of categories in the Transcendental Deduction. This is not because he did not see the need for such proofs (the transcendental deduction is set out to demonstrate that the categories apply to objects) but because any such “proof” would not qualify as a proof in any unconditional sense. For, although proofs must make reference to something outside of that which they are trying to prove, Kant proceeded to “prove” the objective validity of the categories by making explicit reference to the experience in which such categories are employed.⁴¹ Accordingly, Malpas claims that, for Kant, “transcendental reasoning is understood as operating only with reference to experience and its possibility [...] even though it is precisely experience that is in question.”⁴² Therefore, with Kant (and Heidegger) in mind, Malpas goes on to say:

The transcendental-ontological project is concerned with ‘laying out’ a structure that is already present in our being the kinds of beings we are; that is already present in the possibility of experience. It does not, and cannot, ‘prove’ such a structure in any unconditional sense, because the articulation of that structure must itself make essential reference to being as already given, to experience as already presented.⁴³

If, however, we understand transcendental inquiry as a specific case of hermeneutical inquiry and, accordingly, transcendental conditions as essentially caught up in the hermeneutical circle, then are we thereby denying that transcendental inquiry is foundational? For the very idea of circularity does not seem to fit well together with the idea of foundation. Indeed, this brings us back to Drummond’s reason for claiming that Husserlian phenomenology is non-foundational. It was Drummond’s thesis that

⁴⁰ SZ, p. 205/249.

⁴¹ This point about the apparent circularity in Kant’s “proof” of the principles of understanding is highlighted by Heidegger: “[t]he proof consists in showing that the principles of pure understanding are possible through that which they themselves make possible, through the nature of experience. This is an obvious circle, and indeed a necessary one. The principles are proved by recourse to that whose arising they make possible, because these propositions are to bring to light nothing else than this circularity itself; for this constitutes the essence of experience” (GA 41, p. 244/241-242). See also Malpas 2012, p. 81.

⁴² Malpas 1997, p. 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

phenomenology cannot provide the legitimating foundation for truths since such foundation must be infallible and incorrigible and, by disclosing the hermeneutical nature of our experience, phenomenology cannot arrive at such foundation. As Drummond claimed, “foundations [discovered in phenomenology] present themselves in the form of a hermeneutic circle” and, therefore, our experiences “have *founding* moments reciprocally related to one another but no *foundational* moments.”⁴⁴ Now, as we have already seen, since phenomenology is not so much interested in founding truth but meaning, the question we must ask is whether paying heed to the hermeneutical nature of our experience precludes finding the foundation of meaning. When phrased this way, we can see that Drummond’s case is rather weak. For there seems to be no good reason why the foundation of meaning cannot be caught in the hermeneutical circle. In fact, it is only expected that the conditions of possibility of meaning are dependent on historical, cultural and social practices and also liable to revision through future investigations. Therefore, against Drummond, we can maintain that paying heed to the hermeneutical nature of our experience does not, at least by itself, make phenomenology non-foundational.

3.3. The priority relation between transcendental subjectivity and objects

Nevertheless, acknowledging the structural necessity of such circularity does challenge the idea of foundation in general and, more specifically, how it has been understood by epistemological and metaphysical foundationalists. Distinguishing the two ways of grounding does shed light on the hermeneutical nature of transcendental inquiry and how the circularity involved is still a way of grounding, but Malpas does not provide further explanation on how transcendental inquiry differs from other hermeneutical inquiries. In other words, it seems to me that characterizing transcendental conditions as the articulated basic structures of our experience does not sufficiently capture the distinctly transcendental character of these conditions. If we want to maintain that transcendental inquiry is foundational despite its being a species of hermeneutical inquiry, then it is all the more pressing that we clarify the specific sense in which it is foundational. Therefore, we must ask the following: What is the additional trait that makes certain hermeneutical inquiries transcendental?

This, I propose, is a specific kind of *priority relation*. Priority relations in general are asymmetrical or one-way relations. If *x* is prior to *y*, then we cannot simultaneously maintain that *y* is prior to *x*. Any kind of foundationalism, I would submit, operates with a priority relation. In epistemological

⁴⁴ Drummond 1991, p. 62.

foundationalism, the basic evident beliefs are *prior to* all other beliefs in the sense that the truth of the latter is *derived* from the truth of the former. In metaphysical foundationalism, the metaphysical principle is *prior to* reality in the sense that the former provides the *metaphysical explanation* for the latter. Now, for reasons already given, the priority relation involved in transcendental foundationalism cannot be identified with either of the above, i.e. it cannot be understood in terms of derivation or metaphysical explanation. But then, what is the specific kind of priority relation that pertains between the transcendental conditions and the conditioned or, more specifically, between transcendental subjectivity (as that which is prior to all) and objects in the world?

Besides the two ways mentioned above, one could also understand priority in terms of *epistemic* or *ontological priority*. To begin with the former, 'x is epistemically prior to y' means that the knowledge of x is prior to the knowledge of y. In our case, this would mean that knowledge of transcendental subjectivity is prior to knowledge of objects. It is evident that this is not the case for either Kant or Husserl. For Kant, so long as he begins with the truths of synthetic a priori knowledge claims, it is clear that our knowledge of objects is prior to that of transcendental subjectivity. For Husserl too, insofar as he begins with the natural attitude, even if it is only to bracket the general belief in the existence of the world, our knowledge of objects given in the natural attitude is prior to our knowledge of transcendental subjectivity. Put differently, though it abstracts from it, transcendental reflection necessarily takes our first-order cognition of objects as its starting point.

Could we then think of transcendental subjectivity as ontologically prior to objects? What I mean by ontological priority is the following: x is ontologically prior to y if and only if the existence of y depends on that of x. This looks more promising. For, as we have pointed out, one of the important features of transcendental inquiry is the alteration of our relation to the world. From the naive view that objects exist independently of us, we come to see through transcendental reflection that objects exist only as they are manifest in consciousness. Transcendental subjectivity as meaning-bestowing constitutes what it means for something to exist. In this sense, the existence of objects depends on that of transcendental subjectivity. However, the relation seems to be one of mutual dependence since the existence of transcendental subjectivity can also be said to depend on that of objects. Moreover, if a mutual dependence relation obtains, then either we have to give up the belief that transcendental inquiry is foundational (since foundational relations are asymmetrical while mutual dependence is symmetrical) or we must argue, as I will do below, that ontological dependence does not fully capture the uniqueness of the relation in question.

To begin with, we must first clarify what “existence of objects” means. If we understand it in the naive sense of objects existing independently of us as in the natural attitude, then it would mean that it is required for carrying out the *epoché* and reduction. But since, in carrying out the *epoché*, we are bracketing the belief in the existence of objects, the existence of transcendental subjectivity does not depend on that of objects. In other words, it does not matter whether the objects really exist or not. But if we mean “existence of objects” in the transcendental attitude, then “existence of objects” signifies the *meaning of* the existence of objects. Under this reading, the existence of transcendental subjectivity could be said to depend on that of objects in the sense that the latter are simply part of the noematic correlate of the noesis in the intentional structure of transcendental subjectivity.

At this point, then, we seem to have a case of mutual ontological dependence. But it also seems to be the case that we do not have a strictly symmetrical relation. For on the one hand, objects are ontologically dependent on transcendental subjectivity in the sense that the latter constitutes the former’s meaning, while transcendental subjectivity is ontologically dependent on objects in the sense that the latter are part of the noematic correlate of the noetic structure of transcendental subjectivity. In fact, what this shows is that there is indeed an asymmetry in the dependence relation. Namely, while transcendental subjectivity is dependent on objects, this is so *only* in the sense that objects are understood *as noemata*, i.e. as constituted through transcendental subjectivity. In other words, this dependence relation only makes sense insofar as transcendental subjectivity is meaning-constituting and hence has priority over objects. Accordingly, we can say that despite the peculiar co-dependence relation, transcendental subjectivity is prior to objects in the sense that the former *constitutes* the latter’s meaning. Put differently, we can conclude that the priority relation specific to transcendental foundationalism is one of meaning-constitution. In order to set this apart from other kinds of priority relations, I will call this *transcendental priority*.

Thus, from the above discussion, we can give the following definition of transcendental foundationalism: *Transcendental foundationalism is the foundationalism specific to transcendental inquiry insofar as the foundations are understood in terms of transcendental priority, i.e. the priority of transcendental subjectivity over objects in the sense that the former constitutes the latter’s meaning.* Furthermore, at this point, we can finally make sense of our claim made earlier in this chapter that transcendental idealism entails a specific priority of transcendental subjectivity over objects and the world. Indeed, we can even say that transcendental priority is the basic tenet of transcendental idealism.

4. Three criteria of transcendental philosophy

We are finally at a point where we can lay out three criteria of transcendental philosophy as developed by Kant and Husserl. To begin with, transcendental philosophy seeks the foundation of our experience and knowledge. It is therefore engaged in a *foundational* project. However, as I have argued at some length, the foundationalism of transcendental philosophy is different from various sorts of traditional foundationalism. Namely, it does not seek a foundation from which the truths of first-order claims are derived (epistemological foundationalism), nor does it seek the metaphysical *explanans* for reality (metaphysical foundationalism). Rather, *transcendental foundationalism* looks for transcendental priority, namely the priority of transcendental subjectivity over objects and the world in the sense that it constitutes the latter's meaning. I will thus designate this as the first criterion. Transcendental philosophy seeks for the foundation of our experience and knowledge whereby this foundation is understood as a transcendental priority.

Secondly, transcendental philosophy employs a specific kind of reflection, namely *transcendental reflection*, which serves as the appropriate method of seeking the foundation for our experience and knowledge. I will identify this as the second criterion. What is most important about this kind of reflection is that it is a second-order reflection that does not thematize objects straightforwardly to determine their real properties but, rather, thematizes the conditions of possibility for our experience of objects.

Thirdly, in carrying out the reflection into the foundation of our experience and knowledge, transcendental philosophy elicits an *alteration of our relation to the world*. Namely, from the naive realist view that the world exists independently of us, transcendental reflection allows us to see that the world persists only insofar as it is constituted by transcendental subjectivity. In this sense, transcendental philosophy alters our relation to the world in that it awakens us to the privileged role of transcendental subjectivity. Since this metaphysical implication is an important aspect of what constitutes transcendental philosophy, I will identify this as our third criterion of transcendental philosophy. Therefore, to set out the three criteria more concisely: (1) transcendental philosophy is a search for the *foundation* of our experience and knowledge (though in a specific sense), (2) employs *transcendental reflection*, and (3) it entails an *alteration of our relation to the world*. We will be employing these three criteria to assess Heidegger and Nishida's critical engagement with the transcendental tradition (Chapters 4 and 6 respectively).

Part II: Heidegger and transcendental philosophy in the late 1920s

Chapter 3: Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare the grounds for the following chapter where we will be examining Heidegger's critical engagement with transcendental philosophy in *Being and Time* (hereafter, BT). Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to articulate Heidegger's project laid out in BT. BT is Heidegger's *magnum opus* and is often hailed as one of the most important philosophical texts of the last century. Although the text is not easy to understand, especially with the abundance of idiosyncratic jargon, what certainly make the work more accessible are the phenomenological descriptions of tools, the world, our everyday engagement with others and so on that pervade the whole work. Indeed, the detailed descriptions are so fascinating that they alone can be taken as evidence for the significance of the work itself. Having said that, however, it would be a misunderstanding of the work as a whole if one were to identify this as the main significance of BT. Heidegger's project in BT was not merely to give phenomenological descriptions of our everyday dealings but was much more grandiose: *To clarify the meaning of being in general*. The descriptions themselves must be understood accordingly within the oeuvre of this ontological project.

But what drove Heidegger to undertake such a project and what method(s) did he employ? The systematic and lengthy Introduction to BT provides us with Heidegger's own answer to this crucial question for understanding the project of BT. There, Heidegger articulates the problematics of the work, the motivations behind his proposed project and the methodology for undertaking such a project. Admittedly, the fact that the published portion of BT is only a fragment of what was initially planned in the Introduction creates an obvious discrepancy between what Heidegger promised to do and what he in fact accomplished in BT. As such, we are left with the difficult task of interpreting the nature of BT in light of its incompleteness. However, although such a task is important for the purpose of understanding the possible problems of the proposed project in BT and the trajectory of Heidegger's thought, this will not be taken up in this chapter, for the purpose of this chapter is rather to lay the basis for articulating the transcendental orientation of BT. Accordingly, the aim of the following is to clarify the proposed project in BT as it was initially laid out by Heidegger and, specifically, with regard to its underlying problematics and methodology. Accordingly, in the following, we will be focusing on Heidegger's discussion in the Introduction to BT with reference to some of the Marburg lecture courses that address the same issues.

1. Formulating the question of being

BT begins with the statement that the question of being has been forgotten today. The very question that baffled Plato and Aristotle had been neglected by the whole of Western thought, the story goes, due to various presuppositions or “dogmas” regarding what ‘being’ is. Firstly, it has been maintained that being is the most universal concept that “transcends” the universality of a genus.¹ In other words, being is a universal concept but not in the sense that it lies at the top of the system of categories. To capture this feature, being was simply designated as ‘*transcendens*’ in medieval ontology. From this specific universality, the second “dogma” is derived, namely that being cannot be defined by reference to either higher or lower concepts, i.e. it is indefinable.² But if the universality of being is distinct from that of a genus and hence defies any definition, this opens up a whole range of questions. *What is this transcendent character of being? If it is indefinable, how can we approach its meaning?* Yet, a third “dogma” has prevented raising these questions, namely that being is self-evident.³ If we already know what being means, then there is no need to look for a definition. Indeed, it is true that we make statements all the time using the word for being, such as “Life is jolly” and “I am happy,” with full comprehension of what we mean by these statements. In this sense, we have a pre-conceptual understanding of being but one which supposedly precludes conceptual articulation. So the story goes. But is this really the end of the story? Is it true that being forbids all conceptual articulation, making any philosophical inquiry into the subject-matter redundant? Or could it merely be the case that the kind of conceptual repertoire necessary to articulate being has been lacking? Heidegger follows the latter line of thinking. In fact, Heidegger tells us that what has been said of being, namely that it is universal, indefinable and self-evident, are, taken in themselves, genuine insights into the nature of being. It is only when they are taken as cues for suspending further philosophical investigation that they become dogmas. At most, what these general insights tell us is that the problem of being is a *genuine problem*. The distinct character of being demands a closer look.

The task that Heidegger sets out in BT is, accordingly, to bring to light the long-forgotten question of being. *Prima facie*, this may sound as if Heidegger is grieving over the neglect of ontology only to take up the task of constructing ontology anew. However, his aim in BT was different and importantly so. What, in a certain sense, was more problematic than neglecting the question of being was that the question itself lacked a clear orientation. Before any attempt can be made to answer the question of being, the question

¹ SZ, p. 3/22.

² SZ, p. 4/23.

³ Ibid., *ibid.*

itself must be clarified so that we have a better idea of what we are asking for in the very question. For this reason, Heidegger spends some time spelling out the nature of the question itself. In fact, the whole Introduction is devoted to formulating the question of being “explicitly and transparently,” in an “adequate” manner.⁴ His strategy is to first lay out the formal structure of questions in general and then clarify why and how the question of being is a special question.

Heidegger first identifies three moments in the structure of a question in general. Any inquiry has that which is asked about (*Gefragtes*), that which is interrogated (*Befragtes*) and that which is to be found out by the asking (*Erfragte*).⁵ Put differently, we can say that that which is asked about is the subject-matter or the *topic*, that which is interrogated is the *direct object* of the investigation and that which is to be found out is the *aim* of the inquiry. For example, a botanist may *ask about* the life of a particular plant and this would be the topic of the investigation. The respective research would consist of *interrogating*, i.e. taking as the direct object of the investigation, a sample of that plant with the aim of *finding out* the general characteristics of that species. Furthermore, in any inquiry, we are never without a clue to begin with. As Heidegger says: “[i]nquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought.”⁶ In other words, in asking about something, we already have some familiarity with the topic. This need not be, and for the most part is not, a conceptually articulated understanding. It may even be a biased understanding based on traditional beliefs. Nonetheless, there is always a certain familiarity with the topic that allows us to address the question in the first place. Therefore, when we ask the question, “What is ‘being’?”, we are already working with an *understanding of being*. Heidegger designates this as the “vague average understanding of being.”⁷ It is based on this vague average understanding that we are able to formulate the question of being with regard to the three moments of questions in general. To begin with, our vague average understanding of being tells us that being is not some free floating thing detached from all entities but, rather, that being is the being *of entities*. In other words, being is “that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood, however we may discuss them in detail.”⁸ Accordingly, in the question of being, we are asking about *being* and interrogating, or taking as the direct object of the investigation, *entities*: “[i]n so far as being constitutes what is asked about, and ‘being’ means the being of entities, then entities themselves turn out to be *what is interrogated*.”⁹

⁴ SZ, p. 7/27.

⁵ SZ, p. 5/24.

⁶ SZ, p. 5/25.

⁷ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁸ SZ, p. 6/25-26.

⁹ SZ, p. 6/26.

But our vague average understanding also tells us that, while it is that which determines entities as entities, being is not itself an entity. To use a term that Heidegger employs in his other works (but not in BT), there is an “ontological difference” between entities and their being.¹⁰ This distinction follows directly from the supreme universality of being. For, if being is not a universal concept in the sense of genera, then being cannot be articulated in terms of genus and species. And since entities are the only sort of thing that can be articulated in this way, being is not itself an entity. While this is a negative conclusion, it is nonetheless an important one that tends to be, and historically has been, all too easily neglected, according to Heidegger. As Heidegger stresses, it is a distinction that must be held *first and foremost* if the problem of being is to become a genuine philosophical problem:

The being of entities ‘is’ not itself an entity. If we are to understand the problem of being, our first philosophical step consists in not *μῦθόν τινα διηγέσθαι*, in not ‘telling a story’ – that is to say, in not defining entities as entities by tracing them back in their origin to some other entities, as if being had the character of some possible entity. Hence being, as that which is asked about, must be exhibited in a way of its own, essentially different from the way in which entities are discovered.¹¹

The reason why there are quotation marks around “is” is because, strictly speaking, “is” does not apply to the being of entities. As he explains in a lecture course held much later titled *The Principles of Reason*: “[w]hen we say something ‘is’ and ‘is such and so,’ then that something is, in such an utterance, represented as a being. Only a being ‘is’; the ‘is’ itself – being – ‘is’ not.”¹²

The same point is made in his summer lecture course of 1927, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Here, the term “ontological difference” makes its first appearance:

We must be able to bring out clearly the difference between being and beings in order to make something like being the theme of inquiry. This distinction is not arbitrary; rather, it is the one by which the theme of ontology and thus of philosophy itself is first of all attained. It is a distinction which is first and foremost constitutive for ontology. We call it the *ontological difference* – the differentiation between being and beings. Only by making this distinction – *krinein* in Greek – not between one being and another being but between being and beings do we first enter the field of philosophical research.¹³

Indeed, this distinction proves to be of utmost importance in understanding the question of being. While we are interrogating entities, we must always bear in mind that, in doing so, we are asking about their

¹⁰ GA 24, p. 22/17.

¹¹ SZ, p. 6/26.

¹² GA 10, p. 77/51.

¹³ GA 24, pp. 22-23/17.

being. As Heidegger says, “[t]hese [entities themselves] are, so to speak, questioned as regards their being.”¹⁴ This also means that our interrogation of entities, whatever it may turn out to be, must look quite different from inquiries that ask about entities *as regards their qualities*. An example of the latter is the botanist’s investigation of the life of a plant insofar as that is taken to be a mere quality of, or at least nothing above and beyond the general characteristics of, the plant. When we ask about the *being* of the plant, in contrast, we are asking a different kind of question altogether. As Heidegger says in his 1928 lecture course: “[b]ecause being ‘is’ not, and thus is never along with other beings, there is no proper sense at all or legitimacy in asking what being is with respect to beings in themselves.”¹⁵ In other words, *What ‘is’ being?*, if we were to phrase it that way, requires those quotation marks since that question primarily aims at beings.

Having articulated the topic and the direct object of investigation of the question of being as being and entities respectively, Heidegger deems the aim of the investigation, or what is to be found out in the question of being, the *meaning of being*. Here, one may wonder what the difference between *being* and the *meaning of being* amounts to. In general, there is a close relation between the topic and the aim of an investigation. In our earlier example, the botanist attempts to reveal the life of the particular plant by studying the general characteristics of that plant. The topic (the life of the particular plant) gains clarity by carrying out an investigation with a specific aim (to find out the general characteristics of that plant). But there can be different aims, and accordingly different investigations, that target the same topic. Another botanist may study the effects of environmental pollution on the plant at issue, and the aim of this study would be different from the former. Nevertheless, both will be targeting the same topic: the life of that particular plant. Likewise, the aim of the inquiry into being may vary, and the nature of the investigations would vary accordingly. In the context of the investigation of being, this is to say that the inquiry that seeks the meaning of being is *not* the only possible inquiry that targets being. However, as we will later see in detail, at the time BT was written, Heidegger believed that inquiry into the meaning of being is not just one possible inquiry amongst many others but *the most fundamental* one and hence a necessary inquiry.

In this way, Heidegger highlights the three moments of the question of being: *being* (that which is asked about, the topic), *entities* (that which is interrogated, the direct object of investigation) and the *meaning of being* (that which is to be found out, the aim). At this point, the question arises as to which entity or entities we should take as the direct object of our investigation since there are many things we

¹⁴ SZ, p. 6/26.

¹⁵ GA 26, p. 195/153.

designate entities, e.g. plants, animals, human beings, numbers, etc. In order to formulate the question of being “adequately,” Heidegger claims that “it requires us to prepare the way for choosing the right entity for our example, and to work out the genuine way of access to it.”¹⁶ It is here that Heidegger first introduces “Dasein” in BT. “Dasein” is Heidegger’s technical term for the kind of entity that we human beings are. Along with the three moments, being, entities and the meaning of being, Dasein plays an important role in addressing the question of being. Indeed, as will become apparent, Dasein plays the *most* important role in the way the question is addressed in BT. The subsequent sections of the Introduction are, largely, an attempt to show why Dasein proves to be the “right entity” in the question of being and what the “genuine way of access” to this entity consists of.

2. The demand for a fundamental ontology

In formulating the question of being, we have found out that the aim of the investigation in BT is to articulate the meaning of being and, although the reason is yet to be given, this is to proceed by examining the entity Dasein. But is the question of being merely one question that arises amongst others? Or does the question have some kind of priority over other questions that make it “special”? And if it is special, in what way is it special? It is to these questions that Heidegger now turns, and his aim will be to show that the question of being is the “most basic and the most concrete” question.¹⁷ His argument for this claim proceeds by first showing that the question of being demands a “fundamental ontology” if it is to be the most fundamental of all questions, and then showing that such a fundamental ontology “must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*.”¹⁸ Let us begin with the first part of his claim.

The aim of §3, titled “The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being,” is precisely to show that the question of being demands a “fundamental ontology.” The basic distinctions made here are between the “ontic sciences” and ontology, on the one hand, and regional ontology and “fundamental ontology” on the other. Heidegger begins by pointing out that the positive sciences or, in his preferred terminology, “ontic sciences” (sciences that deal with entities in a broad sense including not only concrete but also abstract entities, e.g. mathematical entities), accomplish a “rough and naive” demarcation of their subject-matter in undertaking their research. Moreover, what guide this initial demarcation are the basic concepts (e.g. ‘plant,’ ‘nature,’ ‘human beings,’ ‘history,’ ‘numbers,’ ‘life’) that are experienced and interpreted by us

¹⁶ SZ, p. 7/26.

¹⁷ SZ, p. 9/29.

¹⁸ SZ, p. 13/34.

before any science of them even exists.¹⁹ For example, before a botanist starts examining the life of a particular plant as a botanist, he/she has an understanding (however rough and naive it may be) of what 'plants' are to begin with that allows him/her to distinguish the area of his/her field from other fields, say, zoology. Based on these pre-scientific interpretations of basic concepts, the positive sciences proceed to make progress by working within that predelineated domain. But this is to say that, if these basic concepts are ill-founded, in the sense that their interpretation lacks clarity or is questionable, then the positive sciences are faced with some sort of crisis at their foundation. Such a crisis was in fact occurring at the time Heidegger was writing BT in the various sciences including mathematics, physics and biology. As Heidegger himself mentions, the debate between the formalists and the intuitionists in mathematics regarding the primary way of access to mathematical entities gave rise to a crisis at the foundation of mathematics. And in physics, relativity theory and quantum theory had sparked a discussion regarding the very nature of physical matter.²⁰ Such crises call for an investigation into the basic building blocks of their sciences, i.e. a reexamination of their basic concepts. Moreover, this shows that preliminary research into the basic concepts is demanded by the positive sciences themselves in order to secure their status as well-founded science. Such preliminary research is what Husserl called *regional ontology* (though Heidegger does not use this terminology in BT). Therefore, in terms of foundation, regional ontology founds the positive sciences and hence has priority over the latter. This is what Heidegger means when he says, "[o]ntological inquiry is indeed more primordial, as over against the ontical inquiry of the positive sciences."²¹ Put differently, inquiries into the different regions of being are more basic compared to inquiries into entities. However, the "ontological priority" of the question of being Heidegger is speaking of in this section does not merely refer to the priority of regional ontology over the ontic sciences. For "ontological inquiry" itself, namely regional ontology, demands further clarification. As he continues: "[b]ut it [ontological inquiry] remains itself naive and opaque if in its researches into the being of entities it fails to discuss the meaning of being in general."²² Therefore, regional ontology itself is said to demand what he calls "fundamental ontology," that which studies the meaning of being in general.

At this point, however, one may wonder why this should be the case, namely that ontological inquiry into the various regions of being remains "naive and opaque" without further inquiry into the "meaning of being in general." Why can we not be content with having a plurality of meanings of being? This point has been raised by Herman Philipse as the problem of the "pole of unity":

¹⁹ SZ, p. 9/29.

²⁰ SZ, pp. 9-10/29-30.

²¹ SZ, p. 11/31.

²² Ibid., ibid.

What, we may wonder [...] justifies Heidegger's assumption that there must be one fundamental meaning of "to be"? Why does his question of being have a pole of unity?²³

As Malpas rightly notes, Philipse's question is not entirely clearly phrased since it could be understood as asking either why the various meanings must be unified under a single meaning of being or why there must be any unity at all.²⁴ Since the latter question is clearly more basic, Malpas reformulates Philipse's question as "asking after the reason for the association of the question of being with the idea of unity."²⁵ So then, why did Heidegger seek the unity of the various meanings of being in BT? The question of unity is not explicitly raised by Heidegger, and for that reason, it seems as though he merely assumes that the need for a search for this unity is self-evident. In fact, it is interesting that he later writes that the "quest for the unity in the multiplicity of Being, then only obscurely, unsteadily, and helplessly stirring within me, remained, through many upsets, wanderings, and perplexities, the ceaseless impetus for the treatise *Being and Time* which appeared two decades later."²⁶ But the question is *where* such impetus came from. Both Malpas and Philipse suggest that the main rationale for the demand for unity is traceable to Heidegger's indebtedness to Aristotle's formulation of the question of being.²⁷ Aristotle argued for the irreducibility and unity of the various meanings of being by identifying the primary sense of being, namely *ousia*.²⁸ For Aristotle, this singling out of a primary sense was necessitated by his pursuit of first philosophy, which studies the fundamental principles of being. Although Heidegger saw problems with Aristotle's identification of the unity of being with *ousia*, the formulation of the question of being in BT, as specifically formulated in terms of unity, provides evidence that he was nonetheless following Aristotle's formulation of it and, by implication, the idea of first philosophy as a search for the unity of being, or the ground of being, as Malpas puts it.²⁹ Accordingly, one could say that Heidegger's demand for a fundamental ontology was guided by the Aristotelian ideal of philosophy as a foundational science.³⁰

²³ Philipse 1998, p. 102.

²⁴ Malpas 2003, p. 92.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁶ The quotation is from the inaugural address given at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and first published in 1957 (Seigfried 1970, p. 4.).

²⁷ Malpas 2003, pp. 79, 93; Philipse 1998, p. 88. Compare also Heidegger's famous statement that it was Brentano's dissertation, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, that led him to the question of being (GA 14, p. 93).

²⁸ Cf. *Metaphysics*, Book 7 (Barnes 1984).

²⁹ Cf. Malpas 2003, pp. 79-80. Charlotta Weigelt has also pointed out that Heidegger's idea of philosophy in the early 1920s (that presumably extends to the late 1920s) is comparable to Aristotle's idea of first philosophy (*prote philosophia*) in that, for both, philosophy is primary in relation not only to other philosophical disciplines but also to positive sciences (2002, pp. 37-44).

³⁰ This is not to say that this was Heidegger's only rationale for demanding a fundamental ontology. Indeed, both Malpas and Philipse also relate this problem of unity to the transcendental problematic they argue is operative in BT (Malpas 2003,

Thus, so long as Heidegger sought the meaning of being in general that provides unity to the various meanings of being, ontology that provides the foundation for the ontic sciences itself was broken down into two levels of inquiry, regional ontology and fundamental ontology, with the latter providing the foundation for the former. In this sense, fundamental ontology has priority over both the ontic sciences and regional ontology. Therefore, the question of being, understood as the question of the meaning of being in general, has “ontological priority” over the question of entities *and* the question of the being of particular domains.

3. Towards the existential analytic of Dasein

In the subsequent section, §4, titled “The Ontical Priority of the Question of Being,” we find Heidegger’s crucial and baffling statement that “fundamental ontology, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein.”³¹ The whole of §4, indeed, is devoted to showing that this is the case. Here, we can distinguish two parts of his argument. Firstly, he begins by arguing that there is an entity, Dasein, which is distinct from other entities in a peculiar way. This entity is unique in that it has a specific relation to the question of being or, more specifically, to what is asked about in the question of being, namely, being. As Heidegger says in an oft-quoted passage: “it [Dasein] is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that very Being is an *issue* for it.”³² And shortly after: “Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological.”³³ What Heidegger is here claiming is that, unlike other entities, Dasein has a pre-ontological (i.e. pre-theoretical) understanding of being. Or put differently, a pre-ontological understanding of being is constitutive of Dasein’s being. Furthermore, not only does Dasein have an understanding of its own being, but it has an understanding of the being of all entities other than itself. And Dasein is unique in having such an understanding. But, if this is the case, then, in order to understand the being of this or that entity, we must first understand the being of a particular entity, Dasein. In order to work out the meaning of the being of ‘nature’, for example, we must first inquire into the being of Dasein. Likewise, all inquiries into the being of entities must lead back to an inquiry into Dasein’s understanding of being. This is to say that a specific

p. 88; Philipse 1998, section 9). In fact, the transcendental motive is especially important in understanding the subsequent demand for fundamental ontology to be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein. I will be addressing these points in the following chapter.

³¹ SZ, p. 18/34.

³² SZ, p. 16/32.

³³ Ibid., *ibid.*

region, namely Dasein, takes precedence over other regions. Moreover, since it was earlier claimed that regional ontology is founded on fundamental ontology, it follows that fundamental ontology must be sought in the ontology of Dasein. Put differently, the meaning of being in general is to be found in Dasein's understanding of being. This, I believe, is the first part of Heidegger's argument.³⁴

But, then, what does an inquiry into Dasein's being, i.e. the ontology of Dasein, look like? How will it differ from inquiries into the being of other entities? The second part of Heidegger's argument establishes that the ontology of Dasein will take the shape of an "existential analytic" and that this will provide us with a direction to find an answer to the above question. We have already seen that Dasein is distinct in that it has an understanding of being, not only of itself but of all other entities other than itself. Here, Heidegger goes on to further explicate Dasein's unique being as "existence" (*Existenz*). As Heidegger later clarifies (§9), Dasein 'exists' in a way essentially different from the way entities other than Dasein 'exist.' Other entities 'exist' *for us* as things that are useful or useless, meaningful or meaningless: chairs are there for us to sit on, fruits are there for us to eat, flowers are there for us to admire, etc. We ourselves, on the other hand, 'exist' in a radically different way insofar as we are the very source of these meanings. Of course, the exact sense in which our existence differs from that of other entities cannot be expected to be found in the Introduction since, to a certain degree, the purpose of BT (at least that of the published parts) is to spell out just that. It is nevertheless clear that Heidegger had no doubt that the being of Dasein is radically different from that of all other entities and that such a conviction is what guides the project undertaken in BT. Heidegger thus distinguishes the term "*existentia*," which he explains as ontologically signifying "being-present-at-hand" (*Vorhandensein*), from "existence" (*Existenz*) and reserves the latter term exclusively for the being of Dasein. Consequently, Heidegger says that Dasein has an understanding of being *as existence*: "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence [*Existenz*] – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself."³⁵ A note should be made here that Heidegger's claims such as "Dasein understands *itself*" and "Dasein understands *its own existence*" are not to be understood as somehow excluding the understanding of other entities and their being. On the contrary, it is constitutive of Dasein's existence that it has an understanding of its own being *and* the being of other entities other than itself. Now, there are two ways in which Dasein can understand its existence. On the one hand, the

³⁴ As Heidegger himself notes, there is a kind of circularity involved in this argument. For, in clarifying the meaning of being on the basis of clarifying Dasein's being, we are already presupposing the meaning of being in our starting point. But he goes on to say that this does not pose a problem to the question of being insofar as there is actually no circular reasoning involved here. Rather, the kind of circularity involved here is a necessary component of our understanding and, accordingly, of the hermeneutic method (SZ, pp. 7-8/27-28). I will be addressing this point in more detail in the next chapter.

³⁵ SZ, p. 17/33.

particular Dasein is said to always have an understanding of its own existence by simply living out its own existence: “Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself.”³⁶ In this sense, Heidegger says that “[t]he question of existence is one of Dasein’s ontical ‘affairs’.”³⁷ Such an understanding, however, which he designates as “existentiell” (*existenziell*), need not be theoretically transparent to oneself. On the other hand, Dasein can theoretically understand its own existence by undertaking an analysis of the ontological structures of existence. Contrasting it with the “existentiell” manner of understanding, Heidegger calls this understanding “existential” (*existenzial*). As such, the ontological analysis of Dasein’s existence is called “the existential analytic of Dasein.” With this, it is argued that fundamental ontology must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein through a two-step argument.

But here, we must ask: How does this conclusion relate to the heading of §4, “The Ontical Priority of the Question of Being?” What does “ontical priority” designate here? In §3, we examined the “ontological priority of the question of being.” The meaning of “ontological priority” was relatively straightforward. There, Heidegger argued that fundamental ontology has priority over regional ontology and that regional ontology in turn has priority over the positive sciences insofar as fundamental ontology founds both regional ontology and the positive sciences. And, since fundamental ontology and regional ontology are both ontological inquiries, it was claimed that ontological inquiry has priority over the inquiries of the positive sciences. Consequently, we can understand “ontological priority” to signify priority in the order of the sciences: a particular science has ontological priority over another, or other, science(s), when the former provides the foundation for the latter. In contrast, the meaning of the “ontical priority of the question of being” is not very clear. In §4, Heidegger focuses exclusively on arguing for the priority of Dasein over all other entities in order to establish the claim that fundamental ontology must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein. In this sense, the section argues for the ontical priority of *Dasein*. But to say that Dasein has ontical priority with regard to the question of being (i.e. that the entity Dasein has priority over all other entities with regard to the question of being) is not the same as claiming that the *question itself* has ontical priority. Heidegger does not provide us with a clear explanation of how the priority of Dasein translates into the ontical priority of the question of being. As a matter of fact, it is not even clear what the ontical priority of the question of being could possibly mean. Nonetheless, he does provide us with a hint as to what this could mean and why it could be maintained. The hint is given when

³⁶ SZ, p. 12/33.

³⁷ Ibid., *ibid.*

he claims that “the roots of the existential analytic, on its part, are ultimately *existentiell*, that is, *ontical*.”³⁸ He explains that only when the existential analytic is seized upon as the possibility of Dasein’s own individual being does it become an “adequately founded ontological problematic.”³⁹ And upon noting this, he continues: “[b]ut with this, the ontical priority of the question of being has also become plain.”⁴⁰ Although it is not easy to see how the ontical priority has become plain with such little explanation, we can conjecture that the question of being is “ontically prior” in the sense that the question itself belongs to the very possibility of Dasein’s existence without which the existential analytic could not unfold. In other words, without the self-questioning of one’s own existence, it would not be possible to disclose the existential structures. This is in fact an important point that suggests the prescriptive character of the ontological analytic to which we will return in the next chapter.

Let us now summarize the foregoing. Heidegger has first shown that the question of being involves three moments: *being* (that which is asked about, the topic), *entities* (that which is interrogated, the direct object of investigation) and the *meaning of being* (that which is to be found out, the aim). Then, it was shown that the “right entity” to be interrogated in its being is *Dasein*. Accordingly, the question of the meaning of being is to take its departure in the being of Dasein. Finally, it was further established that the question of the meaning of being, i.e. the question of fundamental ontology, was to be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein (which is ultimately ontically grounded).

4. The phenomenological method

Now, after having shown that the inquiry into Dasein’s being will take the form of an existential analytic, Heidegger goes on to clarify the specific method to be employed. From the very beginning, Heidegger makes it clear that he is opposed to any kind of dogmatic construction, be it based on tradition, system or philosophical school. Instead of blindly adopting some standpoint, the correct way to proceed is to go back to the things themselves. Hence Heidegger says:

With the question of the meaning of being, our investigation comes up against the fundamental question of philosophy. This is one that must be treated *phenomenologically*.⁴¹

³⁸ SZ, p. 13/34.

³⁹ SZ, pp. 13-14/34.

⁴⁰ SZ, p. 14/34.

⁴¹ SZ, p. 28/50.

After having said that, the first point he underscores is that phenomenology is primarily a methodological concept. It signifies neither a philosophical school nor a particular science with its own specific subject-matter. Phenomenology rather expresses the *how* of the research. In this regard, “To the things themselves!” – as Husserl rightly put it – expresses the maxim of phenomenology. But Heidegger does not merely take Husserl at his words and apply it to his own work. For that would reduce phenomenology to another dogmatic tradition. While Heidegger expresses his indebtedness to Husserl for having prepared the ground for doing concrete phenomenological work, he goes on to say that:

[W]hat is essential in it [phenomenology] does not lie in its actuality as a philosophical ‘movement.’ Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility.⁴²

While there is no denying that Husserl inaugurated a new movement that is seen as a tradition in itself, phenomenology proper does not amount to such a tradition if by that we mean what has actually been accomplished by Husserl. Rather, insofar as phenomenology primarily signifies the method of doing research, the essence of phenomenology lies in its possibilities. Although this is not at all to deny Husserl’s achievements, Heidegger’s emphasis here on the possibilities of phenomenology over its actuality nevertheless intimates his reluctance to fully accept Husserl’s idea of phenomenology, whatever that may be. We can also sense this critical tone when Heidegger suggests that the very maxim of phenomenology demands a closer look. He explains that “To the things themselves!” is an expression of a principle not only for phenomenologists but for all scientists who want to abstain from mere speculation. In this sense, it is a ‘self-evident’ principle. But if this is the case, then the following question arises: “[w]hy should anything so self-evident be taken up explicitly in giving a title to a branch of research?”⁴³ He then goes on to say: “[i]n point of fact, the issue here is a kind of ‘self-evidence’ which we should like to bring closer to us, so far as it is important to do so in casting light upon the procedure of our treatise.”⁴⁴ Indeed, only by articulating the apparent self-evidence of this principle will the “genuine way of access” to Dasein become evident. Heidegger thus goes on to explicate this “self-evident” principle in phenomenology by way of expounding the conception of phenomenology.

4.1. The meaning of phenomenon

⁴² SZ, p. 38/62-63.

⁴³ SZ, p. 28/50.

⁴⁴ Ibid., *ibid.*

Heidegger begins by breaking the concept into its two components, 'phenomenon' and 'logos.' The meaning of the compound is to be found out after inquiring into the two individually. We are first introduced to the meaning of the Greek verb, φαίνεσθαι (*phaineisthai*), from which the word for phenomenon, φαινόμενον (*phainomenon*), is derived: *to show itself*. Accordingly, 'phenomenon' signifies "that which shows itself in itself."⁴⁵ A thing, however, may show itself in itself in different ways. It may show itself in itself *as that which shows itself in itself*, or it may show itself in itself *as something which in itself it is not*. Heidegger calls the former "the positive and primordial signification of φαινόμενον" and the latter founded sense of phenomenon, "'phenomenon' as semblance."⁴⁶ Let us think of Henri Fantin-Latour's painting of three peaches. Looking at the painting, one may say that the peaches *seem like* real peaches. In this way, the painting shows itself as something which in itself it is *not*. However, it is because the painting makes a pretension of showing itself as that which shows itself in itself, namely as real peaches, that the painted peaches can seem like real peaches at all. Therefore, Heidegger says:

Only when the meaning of something is such that it makes a pretension of showing itself – that is, of being a phenomenon – *can* it show itself as something which it is *not*; only then *can* it 'merely look like so-and-so'.⁴⁷

It is in this sense, then, that the primordial sense of phenomenon is "already included as that upon which the second signification is founded."⁴⁸

These two meanings of phenomenon, phenomenon in the primordial sense and phenomenon as semblance, are both cases where things show themselves in themselves. There is, however, another way that things can show up, namely as *not* showing themselves. Heidegger designates the latter as "appearances" (*Erscheinungen*) and distinguishes them altogether from the class of phenomena. He does this by distinguishing "showing itself" (*sich zeigen*) from "announcing itself" (*sich melden*). Let us refer to an example Heidegger himself gives. When one speaks of symptoms of an illness, one has in mind some kind of occurrences in the body that indicate the illness. In having a fever, for example, we say that it *appears* that you have some sort of illness. The illness itself, however, does *not* show itself. Rather, it "announces itself" through or in something that does show itself. Hence the illness, which does not show itself, announces itself through that which shows itself, namely the fever: "[a]ppearing is a *not-showing*."

⁴⁵ SZ, p. 28/51.

⁴⁶ SZ, p. 29/51.

⁴⁷ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ibid., *ibid.*

itself (*Sich-nicht-zeigen*).⁴⁹ However, as is clear in the example, “appearances” presuppose “phenomena.” For although appearances are precisely defined by the fact that they do not show themselves in themselves, they necessarily become manifest through that which does in fact show itself in itself. Therefore, it is claimed that “phenomena are *never* appearances, though on the other hand every appearance is dependent on phenomena.”⁵⁰ There is also a sense in which one can speak of “*mere* appearances.” This is a case in which that which shows itself is taken to “emanate” (*ausstrahlen*) from that which never manifests and, hence, “as an emanation of what it announces, it keeps this very thing constantly veiled in itself.”⁵¹ Heidegger tells us that Kant used the term “appearance” in a twofold way to signify both “phenomenon” in the primordial sense of showing itself in itself and “mere appearance.” Namely, insofar as appearance denotes the objects of empirical intuition, it signifies that which shows itself in itself. Yet insofar as these objects of empirical intuition are thought to emanate from something which hides itself, namely from the thing-in-itself, they are also “mere appearances.”⁵²

From the above discussion, Heidegger clarified the following point: The multiplicity of the meanings of the word “phenomenon” all presuppose a single meaning of the term, namely *that which shows itself in itself*. With this, then, we have arrived at the primordial conception of phenomenon. At this point, Heidegger distinguishes the “formal” conception of phenomenon from its “ordinary” conception. When we leave open the content of what we take as that which shows itself in itself, we have the formal conception of phenomenon. The ordinary conception, on the other hand, takes this to designate things accessible through our empirical intuition or, more simply, through our senses. Heidegger further informs us that “this ordinary conception is not the phenomenological conception.”⁵³ So then, what is the “phenomenological conception” of phenomenon? Before this can be clarified, however, we must first turn to the latter half of “phenomenology,” namely “logos.”

4.2. The meaning of logos

Just as ‘phenomenon’ had a primordial signification amongst the multiplicity of meanings attached to the word, Heidegger brings our focus to the basic meaning of the word λόγος (*logos*), which he designates as “discourse” (*Rede*). The function of discourse, he says, lies in δηλοῦν (*deloun*) which is “to

⁴⁹ SZ, p. 29/52.

⁵⁰ SZ, p. 30/53.

⁵¹ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁵² SZ, p. 30/53-54.

⁵³ SZ, p. 31/54.

make manifest what one is ‘talking about’ in one’s discourse.”⁵⁴ Heidegger further expounds Aristotle’s rendering of this function of discourse as ἀποφαίνεσθαι (*apophainesthai*), which means to let something be seen *from* (ἀπό-) the very thing which the discourse is about. This is to say that what is being said in discourse does not come from elsewhere but from the very thing that is being said. Accordingly, discourse is a *letting something be seen by way of pointing it out* (*aufweisenden Sehenlassen*):

In discourse (ἀπόφανσις), so far as it is genuine, *what* is said is drawn *from* what the talk is about, so that discursive communication, in what it says, makes manifest what it is talking about, and thus makes this accessible to the other party. This is the structure of the λόγος as ἀπόφανσις.⁵⁵

Moreover, this way of putting it marks the particular way that discourse in the “genuine” sense lets things be seen. For example, requesting (*das Bitten*, εὐχή: *euche*), which is another form of discourse, does not count as a genuine sense of discourse by this definition since in requesting, according to Heidegger, one does not draw what is being said from the very thing that is being said. In addition, this pointing out of that which is being said is not a pointing out in the sense of a mere pointing to something and saying, “This.” Rather, in discourse, one lets something be seen *as* something, in its *togetherness* with something. In other words, logos as ἀπόφανσις has the structural form of *synthesis* (σύνθεσις).⁵⁶ Therefore, we can say that logos as *apophansis* is a letting something be seen *from* the very thing itself *as* something.

4.3. The meaning of phenomenology

From the above discussion, we have reached the fundamental signification of ‘phenomenon’ and ‘logos’ respectively. In the primordial sense, ‘phenomenon’ is ‘that which shows itself in itself’ and ‘logos’ is ‘letting something be seen *from* the very thing itself *as* something.’ When put this way, we immediately realize that the two meanings appear to fit well together. As Heidegger says, “we are struck by an inner relationship between the things meant by the terms.”⁵⁷ Hence when they are put together, ‘phenomenology’ or “λέγειν τὰ φαινόμενα” translates into “ἀποφαίνεσθαι τὰ φαινόμενα,” which means “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”⁵⁸ Immediately after formulating this definition of phenomenology, Heidegger adds: “[b]ut here we are

⁵⁴ SZ, p. 32/56.

⁵⁵ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁵⁶ SZ, p. 33/56.

⁵⁷ SZ, p. 34/58.

⁵⁸ Ibid., *ibid.*

expressing nothing else than the maxim formulated above: “To the things themselves!”⁵⁹ At this point, we are brought back to the initial question that inspired the exploration into the meaning of phenomenology. Namely, in what sense is the maxim, “To the things themselves!,” self-evident, and why does it have to be specifically set out as the maxim of phenomenology?

To begin with, the above discussion has shown that, despite the apparent isomorphism between phenomenology and other sciences in the sense that they share the form of a Greek term followed by ‘-logy,’ phenomenology is unlike the others. To give a few examples, theology is the ‘logos’ or science of, Θεός (*theos*) or God, geology is the science of γῆ (*ge*) or earth, and anthropology is the science of ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*) or man. Phenomenology, however, is not the science of phenomena in the same manner. For unlike the other sciences, which are defined by their delimitation of their field of research to a particular subject-matter, phenomenology, by definition, has no such specification. This is precisely the reason why phenomenology is a *methodological* concept. It expresses the how and not the what:

The word [phenomenology] merely informs us of the “*how*” with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science ‘of’ phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly.⁶⁰

Phenomenology, therefore, purely designates the way of access to whatever it is that it lets be seen.

This way of characterizing phenomenology fits well with the fact that we have no problem formulating and imagining the existence of the various branches of research under the rubric, ‘phenomenology of.’ Indeed, much work has been done on the phenomenology of emotion, embodiment, perception, etc. This is just to say that anything that can be called a phenomenon, i.e. anything that allows itself to show itself in itself, has the possibility of being taken up phenomenologically. Yet when Heidegger proceeds with his analysis in BT, he is not just randomly taking *a* phenomenon that interested him for whatever reason. In other words, his particular focus on being is not just an outcome of the arbitrary choice. This is where the “phenomenological conception” of phenomenon becomes relevant. As we saw earlier in the discussion of the meaning of phenomenon, Heidegger distinguished the “formal” conception of phenomenon (when the subject-matter is left open) from its “ordinary” conception (when phenomenon is identified with the object of empirical intuition). The “phenomenological” conception is distinguished from both of the above. Let us quote Heidegger at length since what he says here about the phenomenological conception of phenomenon is telling:

⁵⁹ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁶⁰ SZ, p. 35/59.

What is it that phenomenology is to 'let us see'? What is it that must be called a 'phenomenon' in a distinctive sense? What is it that by its very essence is *necessarily* the theme whenever we exhibit something *explicitly*? Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does *not* show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground. Yet that which remains *hidden* in an egregious sense, or which relapses and gets *covered up* again, or which shows itself only '*in disguise*', is not just this entity or that, but rather the Being of entities, as our previous observations have shown.⁶¹

Here, we are informed that the phenomenological conception of phenomenon is that which is "proximally and for the most part" *hidden* and hence does *not* show itself. This contrasts sharply with the ordinary conception, for, according to it, phenomenon is that which proximally and for the most part does show itself. In everyday life, we are in touch with objects through our sensory perception and usually, we take these objects as phenomena. But that which remains hidden from us is said to pertain to an object "as to constitute its meaning and its ground." From these two characterizations, namely hiddenness and the essential relation to objects, Heidegger concludes that the phenomenological conception of phenomenon amounts to nothing less than the *being* of objects or entities. This is not a surprising conclusion when we recall his emphatic discussion at the beginning of the Introduction of the negligence of being and its essential relation to entities (i.e. that being is always the being of entities). However, it is somewhat surprising that Heidegger appeals here to the notion of *hiddenness*. For did we not concede that "phenomenon" means "that which shows itself in itself" and *not* "that which does not show itself," i.e. "appearance"? Is Heidegger committed to the idiosyncratic claim that the phenomenological conception of phenomenon is appearance?

The answer is negative if we are mindful of what "hiddenness" means in this particular case. As we recall, appearance was something which never showed itself but rather *announced itself* through something else which showed itself in itself. Hence appearances are *forever* hidden from us in the sense that they are, by definition, not phenomena in the primordial sense of showing themselves in themselves. Illness, for example, can never become a phenomenon because illness is something that announces itself through that which shows itself in itself. When speaking of the phenomenological conception of phenomenon, however, Heidegger is careful to say that being is hidden from us "proximally and for the most part." In other words, 'being' is not *in principle* hidden from us as appearances are but, rather, it is hidden from us in the sense that it is "covered up." Indeed, phenomena get covered up for various reasons:

⁶¹ Ibid., *ibid.*

they may be merely undiscovered and hence neither known nor unknown, buried in the sense that they have deteriorated, or disguised and passed off as something else. But does not this very possibility of the covered-up-ness of phenomena precisely imply the opposite, namely the possibility of becoming uncovered? Indeed, Heidegger says: “[a]nd just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part not given, there is need for phenomenology. *Covered-up-ness is the counter concept to ‘phenomenon.’*”⁶² Accordingly, one must take pains to uncover the phenomena, and this is precisely the job of phenomenology. As Heidegger says, the “way in which Being and its structures are encountered in the mode of phenomenon is one which must first of all be *wrested* [*abgewonnen werden*] from the objects of phenomenology.”⁶³

From the above, we can claim that “To the things themselves!” is specifically designated as a maxim of phenomenology not only because, as Heidegger himself says, that is just what the composite word ‘phenomenology’ signifies (i.e. phenomenology just means letting that which shows itself be seen from itself), but more specifically because the “things themselves” in this maxim has a particular meaning in phenomenology. To speak in terms of the “self-evident” character of this maxim, we must attend to the particular sense of self-evidence in phenomenology as opposed to the sense it has for the other sciences. Namely, all sciences advocate this maxim (in the sense that it constitutes the ideal of a *good* science) insofar as it means that they are opposed to “all free-floating constructions and accidental findings”, “taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated” and “those pseudo-questions which parade themselves as ‘problems’, often for generations at a time.”⁶⁴ Having freed themselves from such dogmatic presuppositions and the like, the sciences claim to be going back *to the things themselves*. Yet, the sense in which this maxim is a “self-evident” principle for phenomenology is rather different and much more specific. For one thing, the principle is self-evident for phenomenology precisely because, as we just said, it expresses what phenomenology signifies. But more specifically, “going back to the things themselves” in phenomenology translates to uncovering that which is proximally and for the most part covered-up and hidden from us. This *uncovering of their covered-up-ness* is what going back to the things themselves signifies in phenomenology. Moreover, this maxim is expressive of a normative ideal insofar as that which is proximally and for the most part hidden, namely *being*, must be “wrested” from its hiddenness.

⁶² SZ, p. 36/60 (my emphasis).

⁶³ SZ, p. 36/61.

⁶⁴ SZ, p. 28/50.

Now, having identified the *phenomenological conception* of phenomenon as being, we are led to qualify what was previously said about phenomenology, namely that phenomenology, unlike other sciences, does not delimit its subject-matter. For whilst it is still true that phenomenology primarily designates the how and not the what, insofar as being is that which comprises the phenomenological conception of phenomenon, phenomenology does have its specific subject-matter. As Heidegger says, “[w]ith regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities – ontology.”⁶⁵ Put differently, while phenomenology is a methodological concept and hence necessarily a phenomenology of something, there is a distinct kind of phenomenon that takes precedence over others, namely being. The phenomenology of being is therefore phenomenology *par excellence*. This indeed leads us to the following conclusion regarding the relation between phenomenology and ontology: “[o]ntology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object.”⁶⁶ Or, as it is claimed shortly before: “[o]nly as phenomenology, is ontology possible.”⁶⁷

Hitherto, we have seen how Heidegger identified phenomenology, articulated in his own distinct sense, as the method of ontology. Now, insofar as fundamental ontology is sought in the existential analytic of Dasein, what we must immediately seek is the method of this existential analytic. Without further justification, Heidegger goes on to say that such an analytic will be phenomenological *and* that “the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in *interpretation* [*Auslegung*].”⁶⁸ The first part of the claim is not surprising since the existential analytic of Dasein is, after all, an ontological (and not ontic) mode of inquiry. With regard to the latter part, however, it comes as somewhat of a surprise, at least given the course of what has been said up to now. Immediately after, he continues:

The λόγος of the phenomenology of Dasein has the character of a ἐρμηνεύειν [*hermeneuein*], through which the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being which Dasein itself possesses, are made known to Dasein's understanding of Being.⁶⁹

It is here that we find Heidegger's important claim that the phenomenology of Dasein takes the form of *hermeneutics*. This is an important methodological point that, together with phenomenology, constitutes the method of the analytic in BT. Despite its importance, however, Heidegger does not expand on the meaning of hermeneutics as he does for phenomenology. In the lengthy Introduction, only a single

⁶⁵ SZ, p. 37/61.

⁶⁶ SZ, p. 38/62.

⁶⁷ SZ, p. 35/60.

⁶⁸ SZ, p. 37/61.

⁶⁹ SZ, p. 37/61-62.

paragraph is devoted to hermeneutics. And in fact, among the few places in BT where Heidegger makes explicit mention of hermeneutics, this is basically the only place where he offers some kind of articulation of its meaning.⁷⁰ In this short passage, he raises three senses of the word “hermeneutic.” According to the first and “primordial signification of the word,” the phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic in the sense that it is in the business of interpreting the meaning of Dasein’s being and that of the being of entities other than itself. Namely, in and through such interpreting, “the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being which Dasein itself possesses, are *made known* to Dasein’s understanding of Being.”⁷¹ This “making known” to one’s understanding, the laying-out (*Auslegung*) of meaning by making it explicit, is what hermeneutics means in this first sense. The second sense has a much more specific meaning. Heidegger says:

But to the extent that by uncovering the meaning of Being and the basic structures of Dasein in general we may exhibit the horizon for any further ontological study of those entities which do not have the character of Dasein, this hermeneutic also becomes a ‘hermeneutic’ in the sense of working out the conditions on which the possibility of any ontological investigation depends.⁷²

While this usage of hermeneutic seems rather unusual, at this point Heidegger merely asserts that the phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic insofar as the basic structures of being that it reveals serve as the ground for further ontological study. In short, it is hermeneutic in the specific sense that it contributes to fundamental ontology. The third sense in which the phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic is, according to Heidegger, in the sense that it is an analytic of the existentiality of existence. Put differently, insofar as it is a making explicit of the existential structures of Dasein, the phenomenology of Dasein is a *hermeneutic of Dasein*. And this, he tells us without further ado, is the “philosophically *primary*” sense. Thus, the existential analytic of Dasein is to take the shape of a *hermeneutic phenomenology*. Near the end of §7, Heidegger gives a concise characterization of the project to be undertaken in the rest of the work:

Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence* [*Existenz*], has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*.⁷³

⁷⁰ Heidegger’s most lengthy discussion of hermeneutics can be found in his 1923 lecture, “Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity” (GA 63).

⁷¹ SZ, p. 37/62.

⁷² Ibid., *ibid.*

⁷³ SZ, p. 38/62.

5. The incompleteness of the project in BT

Let me now close this chapter with a note on the incomplete nature of Heidegger's project in BT, which we touched on at the opening of this chapter. As I stated there, the aim of this chapter is not to interpret the nature of the project in light of its incompleteness. Accordingly, I do not wish to elaborate on this problem in any detail here. Yet, insofar as it is an important point for understanding the nature of Heidegger's project in BT, I will give a brief exposition of what this incompleteness consists of.

The project in BT is incomplete in at least two senses, one which is not so important but nonetheless relevant and another which is very important and relevant for interpreting the philosophical success of the project. The first sense in which BT is incomplete is that the existential analytic of Dasein does not provide a "complete ontology of Dasein":

When taken in this way, the analytic of Dasein remains wholly oriented towards the guiding task of working out the question of Being. Its limits are thus determined. It cannot attempt to provide a complete ontology of Dasein, which assuredly must be constructed if anything like a 'philosophical' anthropology is to have a philosophically adequate basis.⁷⁴

By "philosophical anthropology," we can understand it to be a specific discipline that deals with the nature of human beings and the human condition. But if such a discipline is to have a "philosophically adequate basis," it must be grounded in a "complete ontology of Dasein" that would supposedly consist of a comprehensive analysis of the ontological structures of Dasein. Yet, as the ultimate aim of BT consists not in constructing a philosophical anthropology but rather in preparing the grounds for questioning the meaning of being in general, i.e. preparing for a fundamental ontology, the existential analytic of Dasein in BT will be undertaken only to the extent that it serves this purpose. In this sense, it necessarily remains incomplete as a complete ontology of Dasein.

Yet, insofar as that is not Heidegger's concern in BT, such incompleteness is rather insignificant. It is nonetheless relevant since it sheds light on the provisional character of the existential analytic with regard to the main concern in BT, namely fundamental ontology. For the existential analytic of Dasein was intended as a propaedeutic for questioning the meaning of being in general. This point must be emphasized since we must not mistakenly identify the existential analytic of Dasein with fundamental ontology *per se*. Moreover, this point leads us to the second sense in which the project in BT is incomplete, namely that it is *unfinished*. It is in this sense that the incomplete nature of the project in BT is important for assessing the success of the project. As is widely known, the published sections of BT comprise less

⁷⁴ SZ, p. 17/38.

than half of what Heidegger had initially planned out. Indeed, only the first two divisions of Part I were published (out of two parts).⁷⁵ What is particularly important is the absence of the third division of Part I, to be titled “Time and Being.” For it is in this division that Heidegger was planning to address the question of the meaning of being. Therefore, without the third division, the provisional character of the existential analytic of Dasein had to remain provisional. This has led some commentators to speak of the “failure” of the overall project of BT, and Heidegger’s own later self-interpretations also provide support for this interpretation.⁷⁶ What is all the more interesting is that this alleged failure has often been associated with the transcendental orientation of Heidegger’s thought at the time of writing BT.⁷⁷ While this certainly makes this issue more relevant to our project, it will not be addressed in any detail in the remaining chapters, for the problem of “failure” mainly concerns the trajectory of Heidegger’s thought, which lies outside of the concerns of this work.

Conclusion

Let us now briefly summarize Heidegger’s proposed project in BT. Heidegger’s main project is to clarify the meaning of being in general as this has been covered-up by the metaphysical tradition since Plato and Aristotle. Such a task is subsequently given the title fundamental ontology, which founds or gives unity not only to the ontic sciences but also to regional ontology. But before fundamental ontology can be carried out, Dasein’s being must be clarified with regard to its existential structures due to the specific priority of Dasein’s being in relation to the question of being. Finally, insofar as phenomenology is the uncovering of that which is proximally and for the most part hidden (i.e. being), and this uncovering

⁷⁵ Yet, this is not to say that Heidegger left the unpublished parts untouched. In a lecture course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, held the summer in 1927 shortly after the publication of BT, he writes that the course is set out as a “new elaboration of division 3 of part 1 of *Being and Time*,” namely what he had presented in BT as “the explication of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of Being” (GA 24, p. 1/1). But in fact, the course covers much more than this. The first part of the published lecture course is devoted to the historical destruction of traditional ontology, starting with Kant, medieval ontology derived from Aristotle and modern ontology heavily indebted to Descartes. Accordingly, the lecture course also provides an extensive discussion of what Heidegger had supposedly planned to do in Part Two of BT. Furthermore, the first division of Part Two on “Kant’s doctrine of schematism and time, as a preliminary stage in a problematic of Temporality” was given separate treatment in the so-called “Kantbuch,” *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, published in 1929.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kisiel (1993); Blattner (1999); Guignon (1983). See also the recent publication of the collections of essays that address the very issue of the third division of BT: Braver 2015. For Heidegger’s self-interpretation of the project’s failure, see: “Letter on Humanism” (GA 9) and *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning* (GA 65).

⁷⁷ Heidegger himself suggests this in *Contributions*. Cf. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, §§132-134 (GA65, pp. 250-254).

takes its departure in making explicit the existential structures of Dasein (i.e. the hermeneutic of Dasein), the genuine way of access to Dasein's being is established as hermeneutic phenomenology. Therefore, the project of BT is to clarify the meaning of being in general by way of first undertaking a hermeneutic phenomenology of the existential analytic of Dasein. Or at least that was the promised project. In actuality, the realized project of BT was constrained to what was supposed to be merely propaedeutic to fundamental ontology, namely the hermeneutic phenomenology of the existential analytic of Dasein.

Chapter 4: Heidegger's critical engagement with the transcendental in *Being and Time*

Introduction

The general aim of this chapter is to clarify Heidegger's engagement with transcendental philosophy during the period of BT.¹ More specifically, I attempt to articulate the transcendental orientation of BT and its hermeneutic transformations. But before we begin, a few preliminary remarks are in order. In saying that I will be articulating the transcendental orientation of BT, I have presupposed that such a transcendental orientation can be discerned and that this is due to the fact that BT is, to a great extent, a work within transcendental philosophy. Thus, the following attempts not so much a transcendental interpretation of BT (which may suggest that the interpretation is externally brought about) as an uncovering of the transcendental motif that is inherent in BT. But it must be noted that such a presupposition is not uncontroversial. There are many considerations that must be taken on board. To begin with, nowhere in BT does Heidegger explicitly state that it is a work within transcendental philosophy. Although we find no denial of it either, he presumably had more reason to claim that BT is a work against it than within it. After all, BT was set to address the question of being that had been forgotten by his predecessors, and the transcendental tradition was no exception in this regard. It is certainly easier to find critical comments about Kant and Husserl than evidence of acclaim in the whole work.

Nonetheless, there is an undeniable sense in which BT is a work within transcendental philosophy. Perhaps this is most evident in Heidegger's own assessment when he later explicitly disavows the idea of the transcendental which included his earlier position in BT.² This suggests that, despite his intention to work against the tradition, he was in fact still working within a transcendental framework at the time. The task then would be to unravel the unintended transcendental orientation of the work. However, there is room to doubt that Heidegger had in fact intended a wholesale rejection of the transcendental even at the time of writing BT. For example, while throughout the work we scarcely find him employing the term transcendental, in the few passages where he does, it is employed not in a critical manner but in a way that positively captures the content of his project. As we read in an important passage from the Introduction: "*Being is the transcendens pure and simple. [...] Every disclosure of Being as the transcendens is transcendental knowledge. Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is veritas*

¹ This chapter is a substantially revised version of my article, "The transcendental orientation of *Sein und Zeit*" (2015a).

² Cf. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*, §§132-134 (GA65, pp. 250-254).

transcendentalis.”³ We also find many instances in the work where he uses the Kantian phrase “conditions of possibility” and reasons in a transcendental manner. For example, in the context of analyzing how tools are encountered in our everyday dealings, he concludes from his analysis that our involvement with tools presupposes Dasein’s previously letting the tool be discovered in its readiness-to-hand: “[t]his ‘a priori’ letting-something-be-involved is the condition for the possibility of encountering anything ready-to-hand.”⁴ In the lecture course of 1927, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he even says that ontology is a “transcendental science of being.”⁵ These cases seem to suggest that Heidegger was not so much rejecting as reinterpreting the transcendental from within his own project. If this is the case, then there are good reasons to claim that BT is, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, a work within a transcendental framework.

In fact, when we take a good look at the literature, we find more arguing in favor of this reading of BT than against it.⁶ But interestingly, we also find that these publications are relatively recent, within the past three decades or so. As a matter of fact, the whole discussion concerning Heidegger’s relationship to transcendental philosophy only started gaining attention from around then. What was responsible for this turn of events was the publication of Heidegger’s Marburg lectures (1923-28) in the 1970s. Prior to this, the two major texts for evaluating Heidegger’s stance towards transcendental thought in the 1920s were BT and the so-called Kantbook. While these texts provided the framework for understanding his general stance, which was basically critical, the Marburg lectures revealed Heidegger’s more nuanced relation to Kant and Husserl’s thought. A seminal work that highlights Heidegger’s relation to Husserl’s phenomenology in light of these lectures is John Caputo’s essay from 1977, “The Question of Being and Transcendental Phenomenology.” Noting that in BT Heidegger says virtually nothing about the phenomenological *epoché* and the reduction, nor other matters pertaining to the core of Husserlian phenomenology such as intentionality and transcendental constitution, he goes on to say:

The incontestable virtue of the publication of the Marburg lectures will be, I think, to illuminate these dark corners of Heidegger interpretation. As a contribution to this direction, I would like to address

³ SZ, p. 38/62.

⁴ SZ, p. 86/117. Philipse also contends that “there can be no doubt that there are transcendental arguments in *Sein und Zeit*” (1998, pp. 122-123).

⁵ GA 24, p. 23/17.

⁶ Examples of this favorable reading include: Caputo (1977), Dahlstrom (1991), Philipse (1998), Carr (1999), Crowell (2001), Moran (2007), Malpas (2007), Okrent (2003).

the knotted problem of Heidegger's relationship to transcendental phenomenology, i.e. to Husserl's view that the objects of knowledge are constituted in and through transcendental consciousness.⁷

Caputo's work certainly makes a significant contribution to clarifying what he calls the "dark corners of Heidegger interpretation." Making good use of the Marburg lectures, he gives an illuminating account of Heidegger's stance on the phenomenological reduction and the idea of constitution and convincingly argues that BT is a work within transcendental phenomenology. Nearly forty years after its publication, this essay still remains one of the most illuminating works that deal with Heidegger's relationship to Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. The work is also important more generally since it successfully shows that the transcendental is a key motif for Heidegger in the 1920s.

But Caputo's work did not so much spark the interest in Heidegger scholarship to further investigate the close relation between Heidegger's thought and the transcendental. To be sure, some attempts were made by prominent scholars such as Steven Crowell and Daniel Dahlstrom that contributed greatly to this issue. But a systematic treatment of the topic was wanting in establishing the unmovable place of the transcendental in Heidegger scholarship. With such an aim clearly in mind, Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, both of whom were working extensively on this issue, co-edited a collection of essays in 2007 titled *Transcendental Heidegger*.⁸ In the Introduction, upon noting that the transcendental is a key notion throughout Heidegger's thought, they say:

It is perhaps surprising, then, that more attention has not been paid so far to what may be thought of as the "transcendental Heidegger" – to the role of the transcendental in Heidegger's thinking as well as Heidegger's stance toward the tradition of transcendental thought as such. This collection aims to go some way toward remedying this apparent neglect, and to argue for the continuing significance of the transcendental for understanding Heidegger's thinking, both early and late.⁹

Owing much to their success, the "transcendental Heidegger" has gained acknowledgment both within Heidegger scholarship and without, from those interested more generally in transcendental problematics. Furthermore, the range of the collection of essays in the volume showcases that the transcendental is relevant to not only early Heidegger but also later, when he explicitly disavows the idea of the transcendental.

As Crowell and Malpas concede, however, the volume does not claim to provide a definitive account of the "transcendental Heidegger." Some take the term to refer to a specific period of Heidegger's

⁷ Caputo 1977, p. 85.

⁸ The collective effort to bring attention to the topic goes back to the conference, "Heidegger and Transcendental Philosophy", held at Rice University in 2003. Earlier versions of the essays in the volume were delivered at this conference.

⁹ Crowell and Malpas 2007, p. 1.

thought to contrast it with an anti- or post-transcendental Heidegger. Others understand the term more extensively, arguing that transcendental thinking occupied Heidegger's thought even after his explicit disavowal of it. The authors of the essays in the volume accordingly operate with different notions of the transcendental, and this itself is left up for discussion. For my particular purpose of articulating Heidegger's engagement with transcendental philosophy in BT, I will work with the three criteria of transcendental philosophy worked out in Chapter 2: (1) it is a search for the *foundation* of our experience and knowledge (in the sense that there is a transcendental priority), (2) it employs *transcendental reflection*, and (3) it entails an *alteration of our relation to the world*.

But what is the rationale for employing these criteria in articulating BT's relation to the transcendental? How are we justified in employing criteria that are based on Kant and Husserl's conceptions of transcendental philosophy? Wasn't Heidegger working with a different conception of the transcendental? This is an important point in need of clarification. As I have been intimating, and will be arguing in what follows, Heidegger did not so much reject as reinterpret the transcendental in BT. This is to say that there is a sense in which he was still following the transcendental tradition since Kant and Husserl. Yet insofar as he reinterprets or transforms some of the core ideas in the transcendental tradition, there is also a sense in which he was going beyond a traditional transcendental framework. This calls for an evaluation of Heidegger's project in BT in light of some set of criteria of a traditional transcendental framework. Therefore, the three criteria above are a heuristic device to determine the extent to which Heidegger works within a traditional transcendental framework and to see the way in which he attempts to go beyond it.

The aim of this chapter is thus twofold: to articulate the extent to which Heidegger's project in BT is transcendental in light of the three criteria of transcendental philosophy worked out in Chapter 2 and to clarify the ways in which Heidegger attempts to go beyond this framework. The two aims will be dealt with together in going through the three criteria. At the end of the chapter, I will summarize these points in light of what I will call Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy.

1. The transcendental orientation of BT

Before we start assessing the transcendental orientation of BT *vis-à-vis* the three criteria of transcendental philosophy, let us first make note of some of the issues that are at stake in addressing Heidegger's relationship to transcendental thought in the 1920s. We can begin by noting two related but different aspects of the relationship. The first concerns his relation to Kant's transcendental philosophy

and the second his relation to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger's relation to Kant is a huge topic in itself, the understanding of which would require us to engage with his interpretation of Kant's *Critique* and a thorough reading of the so-called Kantbook, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, published in 1929.¹⁰ But insofar as our interest is to discern the transcendental orientation of BT, we will only be concerned with this relation to the extent that it has relevance to the project laid out in BT. In fact, given our specific interest, Heidegger's relation to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology proves to be more relevant since Heidegger explicitly formulates his project in BT as phenomenological. But this is not without complications since he was not uncritically employing Husserl's understanding of phenomenology to tackle the question of being. Heidegger's stance toward his mentor was, at least on the face of it, more critical and distanced than approving. In fact, and this is the most relevant point for us, Heidegger explicitly rejects Husserl's phenomenological reduction in the 1925 lecture on *History of the Concept of Time*. This has led commentators to claim that Heidegger rejects Husserl's transcendental turn altogether. Some of the most famous of them are Walter Biemel and Timothy Stapleton. Stapleton accordingly juxtaposes Husserl's transcendental phenomenology with Heidegger's (non-transcendental) hermeneutic phenomenology.¹¹ But there are many others who have claimed otherwise including John Caputo, Steven Crowell, David Carr, Dermot Moran and Jeff Malpas. While these authors acknowledge Heidegger's distance from Husserl, they argue that it is not Heidegger's rejection of transcendental phenomenology that separates the two. Thus, in the course of going through the three criteria below, it will be important that we examine and evaluate Heidegger's apparent rejection of the reduction. And if this did not mean a simple rejection of transcendental phenomenology, we will still have to clarify where Heidegger parts ways with Husserl. In relation to this point, we will see how Heidegger takes issue with other relevant transcendental themes, specifically subjectivity and the idea of constitution.

1.1. Transcendental foundationalism

The first set of questions we need to address is whether Heidegger was engaging in a foundational project and, if so, whether we can say that he was committed to transcendental foundationalism. Put differently, could we say that Heidegger's question of being in BT is a search for some kind of foundation? And if this is the case, could we then say that this foundation is understood in terms of what I have called *transcendental priority*, i.e. the specific priority relation between transcendental subjectivity and the

¹⁰ For Heidegger's relation to Kant, see for example: Dahlstrom (1991), Han-Pile (2005), Carr (2007).

¹¹ Cf. Stapleton 1983.

world, the former constituting the latter's meaning? What proves to be important in answering these sets of questions is Heidegger's call for a fundamental ontology and his statement in the Introduction that fundamental ontology must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein.

Heidegger's call for fundamental ontology was nothing less than a demand for a *foundational science*. As we saw in the last chapter, fundamental ontology was demanded by the necessity of founding both what he called ontic sciences, i.e. positive sciences, and regional ontology. Ontic sciences demanded a clarification of their basic concepts, which serve to delineate the particular domain of being. Such ontological inquiry into the basic concepts lays the foundation for the ontic sciences since it discloses the understanding of those entities with regard to their being, something that the ontic sciences merely presuppose. But such regional ontology itself was said to be naive and opaque without questioning the meaning of being in general that unites the multitude of meanings of being. As such, fundamental ontology, i.e. the science that investigates the meaning of being in general, is the *foundational science* of all other sciences, both ontic and ontological.

But that Heidegger was engaged in a kind of foundational thinking is also clear from his formulation of the question of being in BT as a search for the *unity* of the various meanings of being. As we noted in Chapter 3, Heidegger seems to have been following Aristotle here in explicitly formulating the question of being in terms of the problem of unity. Thus, just as Aristotle understood first philosophy as the foundational science that inquires into the unity of being, Heidegger too understood ontology as the foundational science that studies the unity of the various meanings of being. In fact, one could even identify this quest for unity as a common feature of all foundational thinking in philosophy. Whether it is providing the ultimate metaphysical *explanans* (metaphysical foundationalism) or deriving truths from basic self-evident beliefs (epistemological foundationalism), these are attempts to unify reality or our body of knowledge. Transcendental thinking also attempts to unify our experience and knowledge by revealing the priority of transcendental subjectivity.¹²

This brings us to the second part of the question, namely whether Heidegger is committed to the specific kind of foundationalism in transcendental philosophy. In fact, it is revealing that Heidegger expressly describes his fundamental ontology in terms of *a priori* conditions of possibility:

The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and, in so doing,

¹² In fact, both Malpas and Philipse have argued that, in BT, Heidegger reinterprets the problem of unity to integrate both the Aristotelian motif of seeking the unity of the various meanings of being and the Kantian motif of seeking the transcendental grounds of our experience. Cf. Malpas 2003, p. 88; Philipse 1998, section 9.

already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations.¹³

This way of formulating the question of being seems to suggest that Heidegger's search for foundations is a search for transcendental foundations. But we must still examine whether this commits Heidegger to transcendental foundationalism, whereby the foundational relation is understood in terms of *transcendental priority*. It is at this point that Heidegger's claim that fundamental ontology must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein becomes relevant. For this allows us to see how there is a specific methodological priority of Dasein that, as we will see, subsequently unfolds into a transcendental priority.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Heidegger argues in §4 that Dasein has priority over all other entities due to the special relation it has to the question of being. Namely, Dasein is unique in that its very being is an *issue* for itself or, put differently, Dasein has an understanding of being. It is at this point that the methodological priority of Dasein's being announces itself. With this priority of Dasein's being, then, the inquiry into the meaning of being in general is said to take its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, i.e. the existential analytic of Dasein. But before proceeding any further, let us take a closer look at the exact nature of this methodological priority. How does Heidegger establish this priority?

The priority of Dasein's being in the question of being follows directly from the presuppositional nature of understanding, namely the idea that "[a]ny interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted."¹⁴ Although this idea of the hermeneutic circle of understanding is not articulated until §32, the circularity involved in the question of being is already thematized in §2, right after Heidegger announces that we must first explicate an entity Dasein with regard to its being:

Is there not, however, a manifest circularity in such an undertaking? If we must first define an entity *in its Being*, and if we want to formulate the question of Being only on this basis, what is this but going in a circle? In working out our question, have we not 'presupposed' something which only the answer can bring?¹⁵

If the question of the meaning of being is concerned with arriving at a definition of being, surely we cannot presuppose such a definition at its starting point. To do so would be to commit the fallacy of a circular argument. However, Heidegger tells us that there can be no circular reasoning in formulating the question of being since it is not at all concerned with "laying down an axiom from which a sequence of propositions

¹³ SZ, p. 11/31.

¹⁴ SZ, p. 152/194.

¹⁵ SZ, p. 10/27.

is deductively derived.”¹⁶ It is not as if we are seeking a definition of being from which we can then deduce specific claims about being.

It is at this point that Heidegger makes the distinction between two ways of grounding that we employed in Chapter 2, namely grounding something by derivation and grounding by laying bare and exhibiting its own grounds:

It is quite impossible for there to be any ‘circular argument’ in formulating the question about the meaning of Being; for in answering this question, the issue is not one of grounding something by such a derivation [from an axiom]; it is rather one of laying bare the grounds for it and exhibiting them.¹⁷

Since the inquiry into the meaning of being is *not* interested in the kind of grounding that aims to deliver proofs in the strict sense, the presupposition of Dasein’s being poses no threat to the inquiry. As a matter of fact, the kind of presupposing that is involved here does not amount to presupposing a definition of being at all. Rather, the “presupposing” of being has the character of “taking a look at it beforehand, so that in light of it the entities presented to us get provisionally articulated in their Being.”¹⁸ Indeed, it is to have a pre-ontological understanding of being. Taken in this way, far from posing a problem, such presupposing is deemed *necessary* for inquiring into the meaning of being. For this expresses nothing less than the presuppositional nature of understanding, or the hermeneutic circle of understanding. Therefore, the question of the meaning of being must take its departure from Dasein’s pre-ontological understanding of being. This is why, towards the end of the Introduction, Heidegger claims that the question of being takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein:

Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence* [*Existenz*], has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*.¹⁹

At this point, then, it is clear that the priority of Dasein’s being in the question of the meaning of being is established on the grounds of the hermeneutic circle of understanding: since any kind of interpretation presupposes our prior understanding, articulating the meaning of being presupposes Dasein’s pre-ontological understanding of being. As such, the question of being must begin with an articulation of Dasein’s understanding of being. Let us call this methodological priority the *hermeneutic priority of Dasein*.

¹⁶ SZ, p. 11/28.

¹⁷ Ibid., *ibid.*

¹⁸ SZ, p. 8/27.

¹⁹ SZ, p. 38/62.

But now, how is this hermeneutic priority of Dasein related to *transcendental priority*, namely the idea that transcendental subjectivity has priority over the world in the sense that it constitutes its meaning? The rest of this section is an attempt to argue that the hermeneutic priority of Dasein is in fact a transcendental priority. This of course raises several questions: in what sense could we say that Dasein is a *transcendental subjectivity*? And what warrants us to assert that Dasein *constitutes* the world? Is this not just flat-out wrong inasmuch as Dasein *is* being-in-the-world, i.e. the “world” is one of the constitutive structures of Dasein’s being? Let us begin by clarifying this last point regarding Dasein’s relation to the world.

1.1.1. *Dasein’s relation to the “world”*

Dasein is being-in-the-world but, at the same time, the world depends on Dasein in an important way. In order to see how this could be the case, it is first essential that we do not misunderstand Dasein’s being-in-the-world as an entity being located in another entity. “Being-in” is a state of Dasein’s being, that is, an *existentiale* and, as such, it must be kept apart from the *category* of “insideness” that pertains to the state of entities that are present-at-hand.²⁰ The way in which Dasein dwells in the world is radically different from the way in which the chair is located in the room, or even the way in which the human body, as present-at-hand, is “in” the “world.” This last point leads us to the distinction between the “world” that we live in, “that ‘wherein’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live,’”²¹ and the “world” taken as the totality of entities that are present-at-hand, i.e. “Nature.” Heidegger calls the former the “ontic-existentiell” concept of the world and the latter the “ontico-natural” concept of the world.²² The “world” of being-in-the-world is then the world in an ontico-existentiell sense. Yet, Heidegger is not concerned with describing the world and our relation to it ontically but, rather, *ontologically*. Accordingly, Heidegger further distinguishes the being of the world that we live in, namely the “ontologico-existential” sense of the world, and calls this the “worldhood of the world.”²³ With these distinctions at hand, Heidegger then goes on to clarify how *the worldhood of the world depends on Dasein’s being*. And he attempts to demonstrate this through an analysis of our everyday concerned dealings with tools (*Zeuge*).

²⁰ SZ, p. 56/82.

²¹ SZ, p. 87/93.

²² GA 26, pp. 231-232/180.

²³ SZ, p. 65/93, §14 .

Tools, to begin with, never appear in isolation but always belong to a “totality of involvements” (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) that has a complex “in-order-to” (*Um-zu*) structure.²⁴ This pertains to the *being* of tools, which Heidegger calls readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*).²⁵ The pen is for taking notes, the laptop is for writing, books are for studying, etc., and these are all involved in an intricate way in order for me to do research. The worldhood of the world is, in short, the totality of such references (*Verweisungen*). This referential structure, moreover, is said to ultimately point back to the “for-the-sake-of-which” (*Worumwillen*) that pertains to Dasein’s being:

But the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a “towards-which” [*Wozu*] in which there is no further involvement: this “towards-which” is not an entity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is ready-to-hand within a world; it is rather an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-world, and to whose state of Being, worldhood itself belongs. [...] This primary ‘towards-which’ is a “for-the-sake-of-which”. But the ‘for-the-sake-of’ always pertains to the Being of *Dasein*, for which, in its Being, that very Being is essentially an *issue*. We have thus indicated the interconnection by which the structure of an involvement leads to Dasein’s very Being as the sole authentic “for-the-sake-of-which.”²⁶

In short, the worldhood of the world taken as the totality of references ultimately depends on Dasein’s projection of the for-the-sake-of. I use my pen *for* taking notes, laptop *for* writing, books *for* studying, etc. all *for the sake of* carrying out my research and, if it weren’t for this particular project, these tools would not have the specific involvement they have. Or put differently, these specific involvements would not pertain if I did not *care* about carrying out research. Since Heidegger designates care (*Sorge*) as the basic structure of Dasein’s being²⁷, we can say that the worldhood of the world depends on care.²⁸

But what is also important here is that Dasein’s projection of understanding is what Heidegger calls “thrown projection” (*geworfenen Entwurf*). In projecting ourselves into possibilities, we simultaneously find ourselves thrown into some situation. This idea of “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*) captures the “facticity” of Dasein (the factuality of the fact of Dasein’s way of being, which is different from

²⁴ SZ, p. 68/97, 83-86/114-118.

²⁵ SZ, p. 69/98.

²⁶ SZ, pp. 112-113/116-117.

²⁷ Cf. SZ §41.

²⁸ In Division II of BT, Heidegger goes on to interpret the meaning and unity of care as temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) and accordingly, the “horizontal unity of ecstatical temporality” as the ground of the world: the “world is neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand, but temporalizes itself in temporality” (SZ p. 365/417). I have left temporality out of the discussion not because I think it is irrelevant but only because I believe my point can be made without going into this discussion. This discussion of temporality gains more relevance, however, if we engage with Heidegger’s relation to Kant. See for example: Dahlstrom (1991).

the factuality of the fact of entities' way of being²⁹) and the historically, situationally contingent nature of our projective understanding. My project of conducting research is contingent on being thrown into the world, where these things can matter. Namely, in choosing this project, I have already found myself in a meaningful context from which the possibility to take up this project arises in the first place. Thus, *thrown projection* is said to be constitutive of the structure of care.³⁰

The brief overview of Heidegger's analysis of the worldhood of the world above clearly indicates that Heidegger is engaged in a kind of transcendental thinking that looks for the conditions of possibility. For he has basically attempted to show that the structure of care that is constitutive of Dasein's being is the condition of possibility for the being of ready-to-hand entities and the world we live in. In fact, in his lecture course, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, we find him expressly stating that the for-the-sake-of-which provides the *transcendental* organization of the world: "the basic characteristic of world whereby wholeness attains its specifically transcendental form of organization is the for-the-sake-of-which."³¹ But at this point a further point remains to be clarified. Namely, while Heidegger may have shown that the being of the world *we live in* depends on Dasein's being, he has yet to provide an account of how the being of the world as it is *in itself* does so. Indeed, if Dasein is to have transcendental priority over the world, it is necessary that the latter is also established (for transcendental priority entails that transcendental subjectivity constitutes the meaning of the world *as it is in itself*). In Heidegger's terms, it must also be shown that "Nature" taken as the totality of present-at-hand entities depends on Dasein's being.

As we have seen, Heidegger does not begin with a phenomenological description of "Nature" as a way of articulating the phenomenon of the "world" but, rather, he begins with the worldhood of the world we human beings dwell in. In fact, he tells us that such an ontological investigation of Nature "will never reach the phenomenon that is the 'world.'"³² But why not? According to Heidegger, this is because the ontological sense of Nature is a derivative sense of the world that is founded on the primary sense of the world we live in, namely the worldhood of the world. And it is derivative in the specific sense that Nature is a *deprived* mode of the worldhood of the world. But in order to ontologically understand Nature in this mode of deprivation, one must first understand what the world is like prior to its deprived state, namely the worldhood of the world. So then, in what sense is Nature a deprived mode of the worldhood of the world? Ontologically, Nature is the world as a totality of entities that are present-at-hand. Presence-at-

²⁹ Cf. SZ, pp. 55-56/82, 135/174 .

³⁰ SZ, p. 223/265.

³¹ GA 26, p. 238/185.

³² SZ, p. 63/92.

hand, however, only announces itself in readiness-to-hand when something goes wrong with our tools and they become conspicuous, or when they become obtrusive or obstinate.³³ Thus, *pure* presence-at-hand, that is, entities existing “in themselves,” is lit up *for the first time* when readiness-to-hand is deprived of its worldhood. This is to say that, when one exclusively begins with the present-at-hand entities, the “in itself” of entities does not get ontologically clarified.³⁴ As Heidegger says: “only on the basis of the phenomenon of the world can the Being-in-itself of entities within-the-world be grasped ontologically.”³⁵ Accordingly, since the ontological sense of entities “in themselves” and “Nature” is derived from the worldhood of the world and the worldhood of the world depends on Dasein’s being, presence-at-hand and Nature depend on Dasein’s being. Thus, according to Heidegger, not only does the being of the world *we live in* depend on Dasein’s being, but the being of the world as it is *in itself* does so too.

But then, if this is the case, hasn’t the hermeneutic priority of Dasein announced itself as a kind of transcendental priority? For can we not say that Dasein has priority over the world in the sense that the former’s being “constitutes” the latter’s? At this point, we cannot draw any definite conclusions since the way in which the being of the world *presupposes* Dasein’s being or the way in which the former *depends on* the latter remains to be clarified. But so long as Dasein’s being has priority over that of the world in the sense that the latter presupposes the former as its *condition of possibility*, we seem to have a good case of transcendental priority.

Hereto, I have attempted to show how we can understand the relation between Dasein and the world in terms of a transcendental priority. In doing so, I have also attempted to show how we can discern the transcendental way of thinking operative in BT. But at this point, one may perhaps wonder how much of this is *really* comparable to Kant’s and Husserl’s transcendental inquiries. In other words, while we may formulate Heidegger’s project in terms of transcendental language, to what extent does this genuinely reflect Heidegger’s problematic in BT? *In what sense is the question of being really a transcendental problem?* To clarify this point, let us now turn to two particular passages from his Marburg lecture courses where Heidegger explicitly formulates his problem in terms of the transcendental problematic developed by Kant and Husserl. The first concerns *the problem of transcendence* and the second the *problem of constitution*. These passages will reveal the way in which Heidegger is still working within Kant’s and

³³ SZ, §16.

³⁴ SZ, p. 75/106.

³⁵ SZ, p. 76/106.

Husserl's transcendental inquiries. This would then put us in a better position to see that the hermeneutic priority of Dasein is indeed transcendental priority.

1.1.2. *The problem of transcendence*

The first passage to which I want to call attention is a passage from the 1928 summer lecture course, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* where he discusses "the problem of transcendence." According to Heidegger, this problem is commonly understood as the problem of "ontic transcendence," whereby an entity, Dasein, crosses over to another entity such that in this transcending, that which is transcended is disclosed to Dasein for the first time. Heidegger identifies this ontic transcendence with intentionality: "[i]ntentionality is indeed related to the beings themselves and, in this sense, is an ontic transcending comportment."³⁶ But Heidegger claims that this common understanding of the problem does not wholly capture the problem of transcendence:

The problem of transcendence as such is not at all identical with the problem of intentionality. As ontic transcendence, the latter is itself only possible on the basis of original transcendence, on the basis of *being-in-the-world*. This primal transcendence [*Urtranscendenz*] makes possible every intentional relation to beings.³⁷

Heidegger's claim here, namely that ontic transcendence is only possible on the basis of original or primal transcendence, or what he also calls the "transcendence of Dasein,"³⁸ was intended as a criticism of Husserl. According to Heidegger, Husserl had failed to fully grasp the problem of transcendence since he had mistakenly identified this with the problem of intentionality. For Heidegger, intentionality is an ontic comportment in which the subject transcends towards beings. In order for such a relation to be possible, however, beings must have already been understood with regard to their being. Since such an understanding of being pertains to Dasein's pre-ontological understanding of being, Dasein's understanding of being is the condition of possibility for every intentional relation to beings.³⁹ Here, Heidegger identifies this understanding of being with primal transcendence. As he says:

³⁶ GA 26, p. 168/134.

³⁷ GA 26, p. 170/135.

³⁸ GA 26, §11.

³⁹ Heidegger's argument for this claim in this lecture is rather brief. But we can find a more elaborate argument that goes some way towards establishing this claim in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. There, Heidegger argues that the intentionality of perception presupposes the understanding of the being of the perceived entity. Upon first portraying perception as the *uncovering* of entities, he asks: how is perception able to uncover entities from their covered-up-ness?

If then primordial transcendence (being-in-the-world) makes possible the intentional relation and if the latter is, however, an ontic relation, and the relation to the ontic is grounded in the understanding-of-being, then there must be an intrinsic relationship between primordial transcendence and the understanding-of-being. They must in the end be one and the same.⁴⁰

Now, what is particularly interesting about this discussion is that Heidegger is expressly formulating the question of being *vis-à-vis* the traditional problem of how a subject can transcend towards objects. Of course he is not claiming that the problem of being is the problem of transcendence understood in *that* way. Rather, he is reorienting the problem of transcendence in a way that directly connects to the problem of being:

This phenomenon of transcendence is not identical with the problem of the subject-object relation, but is more primordial in dimension and kind as a problem; it is directly connected with the problem of being as such.⁴¹

Heidegger is thus taking up the problem of transcendence understood in the traditional sense and delving deeper into the problem. And he does this by basically arguing that the subject-object relation presupposed in the traditional conception of the problem is founded on a more primordial understanding of being that is not itself another “subject” transcending towards “objects.” In fact, in the same context, Heidegger directs a criticism to Kant that is quite similar to the one he had posed to Husserl. According to Heidegger, Kant had asked about the grounds of the possibility of the relation of consciousness to objects without clarifying this relation itself. Namely, he did not question the subject-object relation but merely presupposed it. In doing so, the relation itself remained vague, and so did the being of the relata.⁴² In this way, then, both Kant and Husserl merely presupposed the subject-object relation without clarifying the grounds of this relation.

But in what sense did they really not clarify the grounds of this relation? To begin with, it is certainly not true that Kant and Husserl did not question the grounds of the subject-object relation. The transcendental inquiry into the conditions of possibility for our experience of objects is none other than a questioning of the grounds of the subject-object relation. Heidegger’s point, then, must be that, in their

How is it that I can perceive a cup, for example, but not a number? According to Heidegger, I can perceive a cup and not a number because I have already understood the former, but not the latter, as something that is perceivable, namely as present-at-hand. Thus, in perceiving a cup, I must have already understood something like presence-at-hand beforehand. Contrasting the “uncoveredness” (*Entdecktheit*) of entities with the “disclosedness” (*Erschlossenheit*) of the being of those entities, he says that the disclosedness of the presence-at-hand that belongs to Dasein’s being is the “condition of the possibility of the uncoverability of present-at-hand entities” (GA 24, pp. 98-101/69-71).

⁴⁰ GA 26, p. 170/135-136.

⁴¹ GA 26, p. 170/135.

⁴² GA 26, p. 163/130.

questioning of the grounds of transcendence, they nonetheless presupposed the subject-object relation in their conception of transcendental subjectivity. In other words, if transcendental subjectivity is just another “subject” that transcends towards “objects,” then one has not yet fully clarified the grounds of the subject-object relation. Therefore, in questioning the grounds of transcendence, one cannot stop short of questioning the being of the “subject,” what Heidegger calls “the subjectivity of the subject.” Thus we find him saying: “for transcendence, as for the problem of being, it is the subjectivity of the subject which is itself the central question.”⁴³ Heidegger accordingly reorients the problem of transcendence to address this very point, namely the being of the “subject” that is the ground of this subject-object relation. Only by clarifying this point will the being of “objects” become evident as well. Thus, understood in *this* way, the problem of transcendence is none other than the problem of being.

But it may come as somewhat of a surprise that he tells us that the subjectivity of the subject is “the central question” for the problem of being, for, as we know, Heidegger intentionally avoided using terms like ‘I’ and ‘subject’ in BT. As he says in BT:

Ontologically, every idea of a ‘subject’ – unless refined by a previous ontological determination of its basic character – still posits the *subjectum* (ὑποκείμενον) along with it, no matter how vigorous one’s ontical protestations against the ‘soul substance’ or the ‘reification of consciousness’.⁴⁴

But the reason why he avoided characterizing Dasein as a “subject” was not because he simply wanted to avoid the whole problem of subject and subjectivity, but only because these terms often carry specific ontological meanings that are misleading. This is why he also claims in BT that the relation between Dasein and the world does not coincide with that between subject and object.⁴⁵ For Dasein is not primarily related to the world as the subject of our intentional acts but, rather, Dasein is primarily characterized by its *disclosedness* to the world. Accordingly, the “world” is also not primarily an object of our intentional acts but “that ‘wherein’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live.’”⁴⁶ It is not as if there is an entity, Dasein, which discloses itself for the first time to the world in its encounter with other entities. Rather, “Dasein is its disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*].”⁴⁷ And, as such, it is *being-in-the-world*. This is evidently a way of conceiving the subjectivity of the subject, namely the way in which *we* relate to the world, but one that underscores its essential openness to the world. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to infer from his refusal to identify Dasein as “subject” that the existential analytic of Dasein has no bearing on the problem

⁴³ GA 26, p. 194/153.

⁴⁴ SZ, p. 46/72.

⁴⁵ SZ, p. 60/87.

⁴⁶ SZ, p. 65/93.

⁴⁷ SZ, p. 133/171.

of subject. Quite the contrary, it is precisely an ontological investigation of transcendental subjectivity, i.e. an inquiry into the being of transcendental subjectivity. This is why Caputo is able to claim that: “[t]here can be no doubt that Heidegger saw his fundamental ontology of Dasein, his return of the problem of Being to the being which raises the question of Being, in terms of Husserl’s return to subjectivity.”⁴⁸ Just as Husserl turned to transcendental consciousness, Heidegger turned to Dasein’s being.

Therefore, we can now claim the following: to the extent that Heidegger was engaging with the problem of transcendence and his interpretation of Dasein’s being as disclosedness was an effort to understand the subjectivity of the subject, his analysis of Dasein’s being is a clear extension of Kant’s and Husserl’s transcendental inquiries.⁴⁹ At the same time, however, in interpreting Dasein’s being as disclosedness, Heidegger was seeking a way to understand transcendental subjectivity as that which serves as the ground for the subject-object relation but is not itself primarily a subject transcending towards objects. Rather than a “subject,” Dasein is primarily the disclosedness to the world. This is also why the world is one of the constitutive structures of Dasein’s being. Thus, Dasein is not a “subject” that transcends towards the object, “world,” but, rather, Dasein *is* being-in-the-world.

1.1.3. The problem of constitution

The second text I want to bring to light is Heidegger’s letter to Husserl dated October 22, 1927 regarding the drafts of their attempted collaboration on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article.⁵⁰ In the letter and the appendices attached to it, he summarizes the main questions that he thought were still in need of clarification and attempts to clarify his disagreements by characterizing how his project in BT tackles the transcendental problem. As he says in the letter: “[t]his also gives me an occasion to characterize the fundamental orientation of *Being and Time* within the transcendental problem.”⁵¹ Thus this short text in fact reveals Heidegger’s own account of the transcendental orientation of BT. In the appendix, he begins by stating what he sees as their point of agreement:

⁴⁸ Caputo 1977, p. 95.

⁴⁹ Jeff Malpas has also claimed that Heidegger’s focus on the problem of transcendence during this period “indicates the indebtedness of that work [*Being and Time*] to Husserl and Kant, and [...] the extent to which that work operates within a transcendental and phenomenological framework” (2007, p. 127).

⁵⁰ For a historical account of the redaction of the article, see Sheehan’s introduction to the English translation of the article (1997, pp. 35-68).

⁵¹ Hua IX, p. 600/136.

We are in agreement on the fact that entities in the sense of what you call “world” cannot be explained in their transcendental constitution by returning to an entity of the same mode of being.⁵²

Heidegger seems to understand Husserl’s conception of the “world” as a totality of entities, i.e. the world as posited. This is not necessarily true to Husserl since he also developed a conception of the world as the “nonobjective “horizon” of all positing” as Crowell puts it⁵³, or, later, the life-world, which puts it closer to Heidegger’s understanding of world as that wherein Dasein lives.⁵⁴ But putting aside this point, for Husserl, the constitution of the posited world can only be understood by recourse to transcendental consciousness, which is not another entity in the world but rather the condition of possibility for the world to manifest to consciousness. Heidegger is in agreement insofar as the being of a totality of entities (whether ready-to-hand or present-at-hand) can only be understood by recourse to Dasein’s being, which does not have the same mode of being as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand entities. This again shows that Heidegger understood Dasein’s being as taking up the role of Husserl’s transcendental consciousness as the transcendental ground of the world.

After voicing his agreement, however, Heidegger goes on to articulate their point of divergence:

But that does not mean that what makes up the place of the transcendental is not an entity at all; rather, precisely at this juncture there arises the *problem*: What is the mode of being of the entity in which “world” is constituted? That is *Being and Time*’s central problem – namely, a fundamental ontology of Dasein. It has to be shown that the mode of being of human Dasein is totally different from all other entities and that, as the mode of being that it is, it harbors right within itself the possibility of transcendental constitution.⁵⁵

What is revealing about this passage is that Heidegger formulates BT’s “central problem” as the *problem of constitution*. The fundamental ontology of Dasein is said to address the issue of how Dasein’s being “harbors the possibility of [the] transcendental constitution” of the world. Walter Biemel observes that Heidegger is here using the expression “transcendental constitution” as a favor to Husserl and that the notion of constitution is avoided in BT because he looks at it as an idealistic residue that must be

⁵² Hua IX, p. 601/138.

⁵³ Crowell 2001, p. 177.

⁵⁴ On the ambiguity of Husserl’s sense of the world, see: Crowell 2001, p. 177.

⁵⁵ Hua IX, p. 601/138. This passage corresponds to Heidegger’s marginal notes to the second draft where Husserl writes: “[i]n fact it is evident that the ego in its <now transcendently> reduced peculiarity is the only that is positable [*setzbar*] with all its intentional correlates.” Heidegger underlines “setzbar” and writes in the margins: “<So it is a> *positum*! Something positive! Or else what kind of *positing* is this? In what sense <can one say> that this *posited-something* is – if it is supposed to be not nothing <but> rather in a certain way everything” (Hua IX, p. 604/131).

overcome.⁵⁶ Endorsing Biemel's point, Caputo adds that the passage is nonetheless important because it shows that Heidegger *could* formulate his problem in the language of constitution since "[f]undamental Ontology is, in its own way, transcendental constitutive phenomenology."⁵⁷ I fully agree with Caputo on this point. The true significance of this passage lies in the fact that Heidegger could formulate his problem in BT in the language of constitution because the existential analysis of Dasein is an investigation of the constitutive dimensions of transcendental subjectivity.

However, in response to Biemel, Caputo also writes that Heidegger is able to speak of constitution because he is working here with a "non-idealistic notion of constitution" whereby "constitution" means uncovering, letting be seen but an uncovering and letting be seen based on Dasein's projection⁵⁸:

"Letting be seen in" Heidegger is no mere passive opening of our eyes so that things may just pour in upon us. It is a matter of actively projecting the being in its proper mode of Being, so as to make it accessible to us. It is letting be in the active sense of freeing the thing to show itself as what it is. Dasein constitutes the world by releasing it.⁵⁹

Caputo is certainly right in pointing out that the uncovering of entities through Dasein's projective understanding is not a mere passive seeing but an active projection on Dasein's part. And he is also right that it is a way of freeing and releasing the thing to show itself as it is in itself. Neither is it merely passive nor is it "idealistic" in the strong sense of creating or producing the thing. As Heidegger says in the lecture course, *History of the Concept of Time*: "[c]onstituting' does not mean producing in the sense of making and fabricating; it means *letting the entity be seen in its objectivity*."⁶⁰ But it is not clear how such a notion of "constitution" as uncovering and letting be seen is supposed to differ from Husserl's notion of meaning-constitution, as Caputo seems to be suggesting. In fact, they seem to be quite similar. For Husserl's notion of constitution does not mean producing or creating either, although he occasionally seems to suggest so. Rather, it is merely a way of disclosing the structure of meaning as it manifests to consciousness. As Zahavi puts it, constitution must be understood as "a process that permits that which is constituted to appear, unfold, articulate, and show itself as what it is."⁶¹ Thus, if Husserl's idea of constitution is "idealistic," it is only because of its metaphysical implications and not because it somehow entails the

⁵⁶ Biemel 1977, p. 303.

⁵⁷ Caputo 1977, pp. 98-99.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 99.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁰ GA 20, p. 97/71.

⁶¹ Zahavi 2003b, p. 73. Also compare with Søren Overgaard's concise description of Husserl's notion of constitution: "*constitution is the process of manifestation that brings entities and world into 'being' for us – the process without which none of this would 'be there' for us*" (2004, p. 67).

metaphysical idealist idea that everything is created by consciousness. As we saw in Chapter 2, transcendental idealism is not equivalent to metaphysical idealism, which says that everything exists in consciousness. Thus, Heidegger's difference from Husserl does not lie in his "non-idealistic notion of constitution" as Caputo suggests. Rather, I believe the point of divergence should be identified in making transcendental constitution a possibility of the human being, *Dasein*.⁶² This is in sharp contrast to Husserl, for whom transcendental constitution belongs to the province of transcendental consciousness, which has been stripped of all positivity attached to the human being. For Heidegger, however, *Dasein* is not "posited" as just another entity in the world but it has a radically unique mode of being that "harbors right within itself the possibility of transcendental constitution." As Thomas Sheehan puts it, "*Dasein* is at once ontic (although not present-at-hand) and ontologico-transcendental."⁶³ Or as Dermot Moran says, *Dasein* "both manifests being and is also a being."⁶⁴ For Heidegger, then, the problem of constitution can only be fully grasped by understanding the radical distinction between *Dasein*'s being and that of other entities. Let us now summarize our discussion in this section and draw out the conclusion to our pressing question of whether Heidegger was committed to transcendental foundationalism. We first suggested that the hermeneutic priority of *Dasein* is a kind of transcendental priority so long as *Dasein*'s understanding of being can be understood as the condition of possibility for the being of the world. In order to substantiate this claim, we then examined two passages in which Heidegger expressly formulates his problem in terms of Kant's and Husserl's transcendental problematics: (a) in his reorientation of the problem of transcendence, we found how Heidegger is still working within Kant's and Husserl's transcendental inquiries while advancing a notion of transcendental subjectivity that serves as the ground for the subject-object relation while not itself primarily being a subject transcending towards objects. (b) Then, in his letter to Husserl, where he formulates the question of being in terms of the problem of constitution, we

⁶² In fact, Caputo's account of the Husserl-Heidegger divide in his later article of 1984, "Husserl, Heidegger and the question of a 'hermeneutic' phenomenology," is more in line with my suggestion here. There, he says: "I do not see that there is any serious difference between Heidegger and Husserl on the question of the projectiveness of intentional life, of its dependence upon anticipatory structures in order to make its way around the world. The real issue arises on the level of whether or not this phenomenological account harbors within it an ontological view. And of course Husserl contends that it need not and does not. But Heidegger questions whether in fact Husserl succeeds in this, or whether the commitment to ontological presuppositionlessness does not itself conceal within it a certain ontology" (1984, p. 176).

⁶³ Sheehan 1997, p. 52.

⁶⁴ Moran 2007, p. 148. Moran sheds further light on their divergence in light of their ways of dealing with the paradox of subjectivity, or what he calls "the fundamental transcendental question": "[h]ow can that which constitutes the whole be itself a constituted part of that very whole" (Ibid., *ibid.*)? Husserl resolves the paradox by making a distinction between two attitudes, the natural and the transcendental. Heidegger, on the other hand, finds a way to solve the problem by raising the being-question and "making historically existent *Dasein* both a transcendental condition for world and at the same time mediating the meaning of being" (Ibid., p. 150).

saw that Heidegger was furthering Husserl's transcendental constitutive phenomenology with his analysis of Dasein's being. These two passages show how Heidegger was clearly engaging with Kant's and Husserl's transcendental problematics while at the same time delving deeper by placing these problematics in the purview of the question of being. So then, we can now conclude that the hermeneutic priority of Dasein is indeed a transcendental priority insofar as Dasein's being discloses the being of the world, much like transcendental subjectivity constitutes the meaning of the world. Heidegger was therefore committed to transcendental foundationalism.

Yet, we also cannot ignore the fact that our investigation has indicated how Heidegger attempts to transform Husserl's notions of transcendental consciousness and constitution through Dasein's disclosedness. But at this point, it remains an indication. The nature of this transformation will become clearer as we examine Heidegger's hermeneutic method and its transformations of transcendental philosophy.

1.2. Transcendental reflection

The second question we need to address is whether it can be claimed that Heidegger employed a second-order reflection into the conditions of possibility for our experience, namely transcendental reflection. To a certain degree, this question has already been answered in the above. For in following Kant's and Husserl's question concerning the possibility of transcendence, Heidegger was also following the way in which this must be carried out, namely, not by undertaking a first-order inquiry that thematizes objects with the a view to determining their properties but, rather, through a second-order reflection into the conditions of possibility for transcendence. Thus, insofar as Heidegger sought the conditions of possibility for transcendence in Dasein's understanding of being, there seems to be good reason to claim that Heidegger employed transcendental reflection.

There are, however, two points that remain to be settled. The first regards Heidegger's *apparent rejection of the (transcendental-)phenomenological reduction* that, if not implicit in his analysis of Dasein in BT, is then explicitly stated in his lecture course of 1925. Does this not imply that he was rejecting one of the main pillars that constitute transcendental reflection for Husserl? Indeed, as I have already indicated, many have taken this as evidence of Heidegger's rejection of the transcendental turn altogether. Therefore, if we are to maintain that Heidegger employed transcendental reflection, we must be able to account for this apparent incongruity. The second point concerns the *problem of reflection*. For it has been argued that

Heidegger's hermeneutical method stands in contrast to Husserl's reflective phenomenology in that it is *a-reflective*. We will examine the validity of such an interpretation and see whether this puts any pressure on the thesis that Heidegger employed transcendental reflection.

1.2.1. The problem of reduction

In the 1925 lecture course, *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger raises the topic of the phenomenological reduction in the context of addressing the "two fundamental neglects" in phenomenology, namely the question of the being of the intentional and the question of being as such. Heidegger explicates the phenomenological reduction as the disregarding of reality and what is really posited: "[i]n the reduction we disregard precisely the reality of consciousness given in the natural attitude in the factual human being."⁶⁵ However, since disregarding reality supposedly entails making the question of being irrelevant, Heidegger contends that in carrying out the reduction, we are "giving up the ground upon which alone the question of the being of the intentional could be based."⁶⁶ Therefore, the reduction is rejected as being "in principle inappropriate for determining the being of consciousness positively."⁶⁷ But one may reply that this does not do justice to Husserl's understanding of the reduction since for Husserl, the bracketing of the belief in reality is conducted to elucidate reality from the transcendental attitude. Indeed, Heidegger anticipates that Husserl would reply that the "sense of the reduction is at first precisely to disregard reality in order then to be able to consider it precisely as reality as this manifests itself in pure consciousness."⁶⁸ So then, if the phenomenological reduction is not so much a total dismissal of reality as a reconsideration of it, as Heidegger admits it is, in what way is it still "in principle inappropriate for determining the being of consciousness positively"? What were Heidegger's reasons for rejecting the reduction?

According to Heidegger, the reduction or, to be more precise, the reductions (since he rejects both Husserl's transcendental and eidetic reductions, at least to a certain extent) are inappropriate insofar as they fail to sufficiently answer the question of the being of the intentional and of being as such. Heidegger provides several grounds to support this claim. Firstly, Heidegger takes issue with the starting point of the transcendental reduction, namely with Husserl's notion of the natural attitude. He thus states his "first critical question": "[t]o what extent is the being of the intentional experienced and determined in the

⁶⁵ GA 20, p. 150/109.

⁶⁶ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Ibid., *ibid.*

starting position – in the determination of the exemplary ground of the reductions?”⁶⁹ According to Heidegger, Husserl takes us to be experiencing ourselves in the natural attitude as zoological living beings, as objects that occur amongst other objects in the world. But this is already a specifically theoretical way of conceiving ourselves. Heidegger thus argues that Husserl’s natural attitude is in fact a theoretical position-taking that identifies our being with ‘being an object,’ which is capable of taking up attributes just like any other thing in the world. Accordingly, instead of raising the question of the being of the intentional, Husserl simply assumes a specific and problematic ontology of human beings at his starting point in the natural attitude.

Moreover, by assuming this way of being, Husserl is able to effect the eidetic reduction universally, i.e. to bracket all questions of existence including that of *our* existence. Just as we would determine the *essentia* of colors by disregarding their particular individuation in our experience, i.e. their *existentia*, we seek to determine the essence of pure consciousness by disregarding its existence. At this point, Heidegger raises his subsequent critical question: “[b]ut if there were an entity *whose what is precisely to be and nothing but to be*, then this ideative regard of such an entity would be the most fundamental of misunderstandings.”⁷⁰ Heidegger is here questioning the validity of carrying out the eidetic reduction with regard to human being since, unlike other entities, it belongs to the essence of human being to exist (not as an “object” but in its unique way of being). In other words, disregarding the existence of human being would entail disregarding its essence. And this is due to the fact that the way in which human beings “exist” is radically different from the way in which other entities “exist.” Indeed, this was precisely the starting point of the analysis in BT, namely that Dasein’s mode of being is radically distinct from that of other entities. Heidegger thus criticizes Husserl for working with an undifferentiated meaning of existence and thereby inappropriately effecting the eidetic reduction for human beings.

Now, upon pointing out the unnaturalness of the natural attitude, Heidegger calls for a reevaluation of the natural attitude in light of our more natural manner of experience prior to any position-taking. But at this point, we may ask: how is this reevaluation of the natural attitude at all relevant to the question of the being of the intentional? Is Heidegger suggesting that so long as we understand the being of the intentional in a supposedly more natural way, we can remain in this understanding, making the reduction redundant? If so, then isn’t Heidegger rejecting the transcendental turn after all?

⁶⁹ GA 20, p. 152/111.

⁷⁰ GA 20, p. 152/110.

In fact, Heidegger does seem to be suggesting the above. But this does not immediately entail that he rejected the transcendental turn (I will turn to this point later). Rather, what it does entail is that Heidegger is here highlighting the primacy of the *hermeneutic method* in the question of being. We can see this in the passage where Heidegger provides his reason for the reevaluation of the starting position:

If the intentional is to be interrogated regarding its manner of being, then the entity which is intentional must be originally experienced in its manner of being. The original relationship of being to the entity which is intentional must be attained. But does this original relationship of being to the intentional not lie in the starting position of the reduction? [...] In the end, this is at least where the sense of the intentional, even if it is not explicitly brought to the fore, must nevertheless be experienced.⁷¹

Heidegger is claiming that, in order to question the being of the intentional, the manner of being of the entity that is intentional must be originally given in our experience prior to the questioning. This is to say that Dasein must already have a pre-ontological understanding of its own being prior to questioning the being of Dasein. Thus the clarification of the being of the intentional takes the form of a hermeneutic interpretation, namely making explicit and laying out our pre-ontological understanding of being. What is problematic about Husserl's reduction, however, is that, at the very starting point in the natural attitude, this pre-ontological understanding is covered up by the theoretically constructed ontology of human beings. What we must then instead do is uncover the "original relationship of being to the entity which is intentional."

Heidegger gives another reason in support of his claim that Husserl's reduction is insufficient in answering the question of the being of the intentional that follows directly from the basic ontological distinction that Husserl himself draws. For Husserl, the transcendental-phenomenological reduction articulates what he calls "the most radical of all distinctions" between transcendental pure consciousness and objects or reality as it manifests itself in consciousness:

The theory of categories must start entirely from this most radical of all ontological distinctions – being *as consciousness* and being as something which becomes "*manifested*" in consciousness, "transcendent" being – which, as we see, can be attained in its purity and appreciated only by the method of the phenomenological reduction.⁷²

But if the reduction draws out this distinction and Husserl concedes that this is the most fundamental *ontological* distinction, the question of being becomes an all the more urgent question for phenomenology.

⁷¹ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁷² Hua III, p. 159/171.

Yet, according to Heidegger, Husserl questioned the being of neither objects nor consciousness, and even less the meaning of being that makes this distinction possible. In this sense, then, Husserl's reduction is insufficient as it leaves unquestioned "*the most urgent question* inherent in the very sense of phenomenology itself."⁷³

Let us sum up. For Husserl, the reduction was a way to go back to transcendental pure consciousness freed from all positivity given in the natural attitude. According to Heidegger, in carrying out the reduction, Husserl, however, presupposed a specific ontology of human being that failed to do justice to its unique manner of existence. In other words, he was working with an undifferentiated meaning of existence or being as 'being an object' and, accordingly, mistakenly understood human beings in this way. For this reason, he was able to effect the eidetic reduction for human beings but at the expense of covering up the original relationship between being and the entity which is intentional. In this way, both the transcendental and eidetic reductions leave the question of being undiscussed at its starting point in the natural attitude. Moreover, the reductions also leave the question unaddressed after they have been effected. For, although the reductions illuminate the basic *ontological* distinction between pure consciousness and objects or reality manifesting in consciousness, Husserl nonetheless failed to address the question of being. Thus, it left unquestioned the most urgent question demanded by phenomenology. Accordingly, the reductions were rejected as "in principle inappropriate" on the grounds that they merely leave the question of being unquestioned both before the reduction at its starting point in the natural attitude and after the reduction to pure consciousness.

But where does this leave us regarding Heidegger's relationship to transcendental philosophy? Walter Biemel concludes from the fact that "the reduction is totally missing" in Heidegger that he rejects Husserl's transcendental turn.⁷⁴ From what we have seen above, it seems that the claim is not without justification. However, Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's reductions does not immediately imply his rejection of the transcendental turn. Moreover, if Dasein's being is a kind of transcendental subjectivity as I have been suggesting, then there is a good reason to think that there is something equivalent to Husserl's transcendental reduction operative in Heidegger's question of being.

As a matter of fact, Heidegger himself provides a positive account of the reduction in the lecture course of summer 1927, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. There, Heidegger presents the phenomenological reduction as one of the three components of the phenomenological method, together with phenomenological construction and destruction. But he makes it clear that his understanding of the

⁷³ GA 20, p. 158/114-115.

⁷⁴ Biemel 1977, p. 301.

phenomenological reduction is different from Husserl's. According to Heidegger, Husserl's phenomenological reduction is the leading of the phenomenological vision from the natural attitude of the human being to the transcendental life of consciousness. In contrast to this, he says:

*For us phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon the way it is unconcealed).*⁷⁵

In rejecting the transcendental-phenomenological reduction in Husserl's sense of the term, Heidegger is in agreement with what he said in his 1925 lecture. Heidegger is thus *not* subscribing to the phenomenological reduction that takes one from the natural attitude of the human being to transcendental consciousness. Yet, what is decisive here is his rendering the reduction to positively signify the regress from *beings* (entities) to the *understanding of their being*. Now, one might think that this rendering is so far removed from Husserl's reduction that the original meaning is completely lost. Even if it could be called a reduction of some sort, it is not the *transcendental*-phenomenological reduction. Thus we find, for example, von Herrmann saying that, although both Husserl and Heidegger speak of reductions, they do so with completely different meanings.⁷⁶ However, I believe this does not do justice to Heidegger's rendering of the reduction. If we pay heed to the two kinds of regress involved in the move from beings to the understanding of being, we can see that Heidegger is only reorienting Husserl's transcendental reduction within the framework of the question of being.

In fact, Caputo has aptly identified the two regresses as two reductions that are intermingled here: the "ontological reduction" and the "transcendental phenomenological reduction."⁷⁷ Caputo designates the "ontological reduction" as the regress from *beings* to their *being* and the "transcendental phenomenological reduction" as the regress from *being* to *Dasein's understanding of being*. He further observes that at the time of BT, the "regress to Being (the ontological reduction) is made possible by a regress to Dasein's understanding of Being (the transcendental phenomenological reduction)"⁷⁸ and consequently, the two reductions end up being "one and the same."⁷⁹ Accordingly, while Heidegger rejects Husserl's move to pure transcendental consciousness, he does not thereby reject the transcendental turn but only couples it with an ontological turn.

⁷⁵ GA 24, p. 29/21.

⁷⁶ von Herrmann 2000, p. 150/132. (I provide the pagination from the original German first followed by slash and pagination from English translation.)

⁷⁷ Caputo 1977, pp. 84-105; p. 100.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Caputo's observation of the two reductions sheds light on the intermingling of the two questions of being I have been emphasizing up to now, namely, the question of the meaning of being in general (the question of fundamental ontology) and the question of Dasein's being (the question of the existential analytic of Dasein). Let us recast the intermingling of these two questions in terms of the regresses that are involved. Fundamental ontology was based on the ontological distinction between "beings" and "being." But insofar as fundamental ontology seeks the meaning of being in general, which provides unity to the various meanings of being, there is a further distinction between the various meanings of being and the meaning of being in general. Accordingly, we can say that fundamental ontology is based on the regress from *beings* to *the meaning of being in general*. But insofar as fundamental ontology was sought in the existential analytic of Dasein, we can say that (to the extent that it is undertaken with the purpose of serving as the preliminary study of fundamental ontology) the latter is based on the regress from *the meaning of being in general* to *Dasein's understanding of being*. Now, insofar as the priority of Dasein's being in the question of being is not merely a hermeneutic priority but also a transcendental priority as we have seen, this regress to Dasein's being is evidently a transcendental regress. Accordingly, we can agree with Caputo that the two regresses involved in BT are *ontological* and *transcendental*, respectively. Heidegger's "phenomenological reduction" is thus a combination of the "ontological reduction" and the "transcendental-phenomenological reduction."

Therefore, it is now clear that while Heidegger rejected Husserl's reduction to transcendental consciousness, he does not thereby reject the transcendental turn. Rather, for Heidegger, the ontological turn was "made possible by" the transcendental turn insofar as Dasein's being is the condition of possibility for the being of entities and the world. Accordingly, Heidegger's difference from Husserl is marked, not by a rejection of the transcendental turn but rather, by making the question of being a central question for transcendental inquiry.⁸⁰

1.2.2. *The problem of reflection*

Insofar as Heidegger not so much rejects as supplements Husserl's transcendental reduction, it seems that we can now say that the meaning of being in general was sought through transcendental

⁸⁰ Crowell has advanced this kind of reading in arguing that the Husserl-Heidegger dispute should not be understood as Heidegger's wholesale rejection of Husserl's transcendental project but rather as a result of the immanent criticism of it. Therefore, according to Crowell, the fundamental point of dispute is not whether phenomenology should be transcendental or ontological but, rather, whether transcendental phenomenology should be epistemological or ontological (2001, chapter 9).

reflection. But here, we must address another problem that centers on Heidegger's hermeneutic method. In his book titled *Hermeneutik und Reflexion* (2000), Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann argues that Heidegger's hermeneutic method is the key to distinguishing Heidegger's phenomenology from Husserl's. And he argues that this is specifically due to the *a-reflective* nature of the hermeneutic method.⁸¹ Accordingly, the whole book operates with the basic distinction between Heidegger's a-reflective hermeneutic phenomenology and Husserl's reflective phenomenology. But if this is a correct description of the Husserl-Heidegger divide, then Heidegger could not have operated with transcendental reflection for the very simple reason that he rejects the reflective method. Accordingly, we must ask: *does Heidegger's hermeneutic method put pressure on our claim that he employs transcendental reflection in BT?*

Since Heidegger does not expound on the hermeneutic method in BT, let us look at the lectures from the war emergency semester of 1919, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," where he first develops his idea of hermeneutic phenomenology. There, he outlines the idea of philosophy, or the future of philosophy as he sees it, as a pre-theoretical primordial science. Heidegger accordingly goes on to articulate the phenomenological method by which we gain access to this pre-theoretical domain of lived experience. At this point, Heidegger raises Natorp's objection to phenomenology that, despite its claim to describe lived experience, insofar as its method is reflective, phenomenology necessarily objectifies experience and, accordingly, distorts the original lived experience. Furthermore, its descriptive character is also problematic for the same reason, namely that, insofar as description resorts to language, it involves generalization and is necessarily objectifying.⁸² Heidegger takes Natorp's criticisms seriously and underscores the reflective character of Husserl's phenomenology by citing some key passages from *Ideas I*: "[b]y the reflectional *experiencing* acts alone we know something of the stream of mental processes,"⁸³ and, "the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection."⁸⁴ So then, if the phenomenological method is reflective in nature, the crucial question becomes: "[i]s this method of descriptive reflection (or reflective description) capable of investigating the domain of lived-experience and disclosing it scientifically?"⁸⁵

On the one hand, Heidegger does not deny that reflective description can disclose the domain of lived experience theoretically. Yet on the other hand, he denies that it can disclose the domain of lived

⁸¹ For a similar reading, see also: Hopkins 1993, chapter 9 ("The Phenomenological Method: Reflective or Hermeneutical?").

⁸² GA 56/57, pp. 99-101/83-85. Cf. Natorp 1912.

⁸³ Hua III, p. 168/180.

⁸⁴ Hua III, p. 162/174.

⁸⁵ GA 56/57, p. 100/84.

experience in its *pre-theoretical* nature. Accordingly, Heidegger agrees with Natorp's criticism of Husserl's phenomenology insofar as its reflective method is necessarily objectifying and accordingly, prevents it from accessing pre-theoretical lived experience. But rather than following Natorp's anti-phenomenological alternative, which has "grown out of the Marburg school's fundamental position,"⁸⁶ Heidegger seeks an alternative method within phenomenology. And it is at this point that he introduces "hermeneutic intuition," a kind of intuition that *stays in* and *goes along with* lived experience. It has the "character of an appropriating event" (*Ereignischarakter*) that is non-objectifying as it simply appropriates lived experience by going along with it and making it explicit.

Now, von Herrmann infers from Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's reflective phenomenological method that the hermeneutic intuition he accordingly introduces is non-reflective: "[h]ermeneutic intuition is not reflection on living, but 'the understanding of living.'"⁸⁷ Furthermore, he takes this discovery of the pre-theoretical domain of lived experience and the accompanying establishment of non-reflective hermeneutic phenomenology as the decisive beginning of Heidegger's method, further developed in the early Freiberg and Marburg lectures and culminating in BT.⁸⁸ Accordingly, von Herrmann compares and contrasts what he takes to be two very different conceptions of phenomenology: on the one hand, there is Husserl's *reflective phenomenology*, which necessarily involves stepping out of the lived experience so that it can turn its reflective gaze back onto the latter as the intentional object of reflection. Heidegger's *hermeneutic phenomenology*, on the other hand, is essentially "a-reflective" and "a-theoretical" in that it interprets lived experience by staying in and going along with it without objectifying it.⁸⁹

In an article where he discusses the problem of reflection presented by Natorp and Heidegger's response to it, Zahavi has challenged von Herrmann's interpretation of Heidegger's hermeneutic method as a-reflective. Zahavi argues that, although Heidegger by and large agrees with Natorp's criticisms of Husserl's reflective phenomenology, this does not prove that his alternative method is a-reflective. Rather, he suggests that Heidegger's hermeneutic method is the explication of a *non-objectifying type of reflection*.⁹⁰ Zahavi is here operating with a distinction between two kinds of reflection, objectifying and non-objectifying, which, according to him, is a distinction made by many phenomenologists. For example, Sartre distinguished between "impure reflection," which transcends the original experience and objectifies it as the reflected upon, and "pure reflection," which thematizes the reflected without making it

⁸⁶ GA 56/57, p. 102/86.

⁸⁷ von Herrmann 2000, p. 96/88.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 97/89.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 11/11.

⁹⁰ Zahavi 2003a, pp. 168-169.

an object lying outside the reflecting consciousness.⁹¹ Zahavi also refers to Husserl's conception of reflection as an accentuation of primary experience or as a way of disclosing and articulating the implicit structures of lived experience.⁹² Accordingly, while reflection can certainly be reifying, it can also be a kind of accentuation without reification. In this sense, Zahavi argues that reflection can be understood as a "higher form of *wakefulness*" and a special form of attention that articulates the implicit structures of our original experience without making it an intentional object of reflection.⁹³ Furthermore, once we understand these two different notions of reflection, Heidegger's hermeneutic method can be understood as the non-objectifying kind:

Thus, contrary to what von Herrmann is claiming, Heidegger's real contribution might be taken to consist in an analysis of this special type of non-objectifying reflection; a type of reflection that can exactly provide us with an access to lived subjectivity that is not vulnerable to the objections posed by Natorp.⁹⁴

As Zahavi mentions,⁹⁵ Crowell has also made the same point in the context of clarifying Heidegger's conception of philosophy and philosophical method in the early Freiberg lectures. Namely, he argues that hermeneutic intuition is "a reappropriation, rather than a rejection, of the genuinely phenomenological concept of reflection."⁹⁶ And, more specifically, Crowell argues that Heidegger reinterprets reflection as a "specifically philosophical species of *self-question*."⁹⁷ Since going through Crowell's argument in full requires much space and it is not our aim to unravel Heidegger's conception of philosophy in these years, let us limit our discussion to some specific points that are relevant for our purposes here. According to Crowell, after Heidegger makes his first preliminary formulation of the hermeneutic method that secures access to pre-theoretical lived experience in his 1919 lecture, he subsequently develops this method in terms of *Evidenz* and formal indication in his lectures from 1921 to 1923.⁹⁸ Now, the aim of hermeneutic phenomenology is to gain access to the "original evidence situation" that must be *uncovered* and *made explicit*. Moreover, insofar as this evidence situation is "my own," in the sense that it is not posited as something over and against me but I am implicated in it, this uncovering

⁹¹ Cf. Sartre 1948.

⁹² Zahavi 2003a, p. 170.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 169.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

⁹⁵ Cf. Zahavi 2003a, p. 174 (note 17).

⁹⁶ Crowell 2001, p. 137.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

⁹⁸ On the importance of formal indication in Heidegger's hermeneutic method, see: Crowell (2001, chapter 7), Dahlstrom (1994), Kisiel (1993).

must take the form of an uncovering of Dasein's facticity. But then, this is just to say that this uncovering must be *reflective*, at least in the basic sense of turning the gaze back upon itself.⁹⁹ The difference between merely living in our factual situation and coming to an understanding through the hermeneutic method must be that the latter involves a specific kind of reflection. Accordingly, Crowell tells us that the "full definition of philosophy implicates a moment of reflection, since the being who philosophizes must concern itself with its own being as being."¹⁰⁰

At this point, then, we can say that *hermeneutic reflection*, if we can call it that, does not step outside Dasein's facticity or factic life and make it an intentional object of reflection. Rather, it is a kind of reflection whereby reflecting consciousness goes along with factic life in order to disclose its *own* situation. Jeff Malpas also seems to be underlining this specifically reflective character of the hermeneutic method (though he himself does not speak in terms of reflection) when he says that hermeneutics is "a kind of 'wakefulness' to Dasein's factual situation" and suggests that "one should understand the hermeneutical as itself essentially concerned with a fundamental mode of *awareness* and *orientation* – as essentially a matter of finding oneself *in one's situatedness*, of finding oneself *in place*."¹⁰¹ Thus, hermeneutic reflection, in short, is the disclosing of and awakening to one's own factual situation.

Now, in what sense could we say that hermeneutic reflection is employed in BT? In other words, *how is the existential analytic of Dasein a disclosing of and awakening to one's own factual situation?*¹⁰² To begin with, insofar as the existential analytic is the making explicit and laying bare of Dasein's pre-ontological understanding of being, it certainly discloses one's factual situation. But in what sense is the existential analytic a kind of *awakening* to one's own situation? In fact, we can find an answer to this in §63 of BT where Heidegger addresses the "methodological character" of the existential analytic of Dasein in light of what he calls the "hermeneutic situation." Here, Heidegger tells us that the existential analytic of Dasein is that which must be "wrested" from Dasein by a kind of counter-movement to its own tendency to cover up its authentic being.¹⁰³ Since everyday Dasein tends to interpret itself in light of *das Man*, which

⁹⁹ Crowell also points out that formal indication is a kind of reflective method: the "method of formal indication does 'repeat' the self-interpretation of life, but it *differs* from a mere going-along-with lived life because it is an explicitly cognitive-illuminative self-recollection (reflection) and is oriented toward evident (intuitive) self-having" (2001, p. 127).

¹⁰⁰ Crowell 2001, p. 143.

¹⁰¹ Malpas (forthcoming), p. 14.

¹⁰² For my purposes here, I did not concern myself with the details of how the hermeneutic method develops from the early Freiberg years to the Marburg period. For a concise discussion of this development, see: Farin 2015. There Farin distinguishes three distinct phases of this development: (1) the initial breakthrough to the hermeneutics of facticity in the early Freiberg years, (2) the hermeneutic ontology of BT, and (3) hermeneutics after the "turn" in the 1930s centering on the idea that language and poets are the original interpreters.

¹⁰³ SZ, p. 311/359.

is nothing but the fallen state of Dasein, the existential analytic is said to constantly have the character of *doing violence* to everyday interpretation.¹⁰⁴ This is also why Heidegger claims that “Dasein is ontically ‘closest’ to itself and ontologically farthest.”¹⁰⁵ But then, this is to say that the very possibility of the existential analytic of Dasein depends on Dasein’s ontic possibility to counter one’s own fallenness from authentic self-understanding, i.e. the understanding of oneself in one’s ontological constitution. In this sense, the existential analytic of Dasein’s being is an *existentiell* possibility of Dasein to come to a proper or authentic self-understanding. This is why Heidegger can claim in the Introduction that the roots of the existential analytic are ultimately *existentiell*:

But the roots of the existential analytic, on its part, are ultimately *existentiell*, that is, *ontical*. Only if the inquiry of philosophical research is itself seized upon in an *existentiell* manner as a possibility of the Being of each existing Dasein, does it become at all possible to disclose the existentiality of existence and to undertake an adequately founded ontological problematic.¹⁰⁶

Thus, the existential analytic of Dasein is an awakening to one’s factual situation *as fallenness* (from which the ontological understanding must be wrested) that also presumably motivates one *towards authentic self-understanding* (in seizing upon it as one’s own *existentiell* possibility). In this way, we can say that the roots of the existential analytic are *existentiell* in the sense that one must understand one’s own ontological constitution in one’s ontic existence in order to have a “proper” understanding of the analytic.

Finally, let us return to our initial question of this section: *does Heidegger’s hermeneutic method put pressure on our claim that he employs transcendental reflection in BT?* Firstly, insofar as Heidegger’s hermeneutic method is not so much a rejection as a reformation of phenomenological reflection, we can set aside von Herrmann’s claim that hermeneutic phenomenology is a-reflective. But if we understand the hermeneutic method as a kind of reflection, then this demands a clarification of its relation to transcendental reflection. So then, in what way does hermeneutic reflection transform transcendental reflection? To begin with, far from posing a problem for transcendental reflection, the circular nature of hermeneutic reflection merely underscores the hermeneutical nature of transcendental inquiry we highlighted in Chapter 2. Transcendental inquiry was essentially circular because it exemplifies the hermeneutic circle of understanding. As Malpas stated:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ SZ, p. 16/37.

¹⁰⁶ SZ, pp. 13-14/34.

Transcendental inquiry operates always from within experience and by appeal to experience. It does not and cannot move to ground the foundational principles or structures it uncovers independently of experience, knowledge or being-in-the-world.¹⁰⁷

Thus Heidegger's *transcendental*-hermeneutic reflection discloses Dasein's understanding of being as the conditions of possibility for the being of entities and the world in Dasein's pre-ontological understanding of being, where being is always already understood. But insofar as this pre-ontological understanding is essentially embedded in Dasein's facticity, transcendental reflection in Heidegger's hands is rendered into the disclosing of one's contingent factual situation through and through. This entails that the transcendental-hermeneutic conditions it uncovers cannot enjoy the status of *universal validity* entailed in the Kantian a priori. As Cristina Lafont has argued at length, Heidegger's hermeneutic notion of the "perfect tense a priori," i.e. the "always already," transforms the Kantian notion of a priority by eliminating the implication of universal validity. For, in Heidegger, "factual Dasein's understanding of being is itself 'essentially factual' and changes historically by virtue of our contingent projections."¹⁰⁸ Lastly, since hermeneutical reflection awakens us to our own factual situation, transcendental reflection acquires an existentialist tone of becoming wakeful to our own situation. Thus, reflecting on Dasein's understanding of being as the condition of possibility for the being of entities and the world becomes a matter of wresting our authentic self-understanding from our fallen state and seizing upon this possibility of understanding in our own factic lives.

Therefore, Heidegger's hermeneutic method puts pressure on our claim that transcendental reflection is operative in BT not because it is a-reflective but only to the extent that the specifically *reflective* nature of the hermeneutic method (1) makes transcendental reflection a matter of disclosing the contingent nature of one's facticity and (2) ascribes transcendental reflection an existentialist role of becoming wakeful to our own factual situation.

1.3. Alteration of our relation to the world

We have finally arrived at our third and final question regarding the metaphysical implications of Heidegger's project in BT: *does it entail an alteration of our relation to the world?* As we saw in Chapter 2,

¹⁰⁷ Malpas 1997, p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Lafont 2007, p. 107. Cf. SZ, p. 85/117-118. Lafont further argues that Heidegger's notion of the a priori as "always already" means, at most, that it is unquestionable from within by those who share the historically contingent projection. See also, Lafont (2005).

it is part and parcel of transcendental philosophy that its search for the conditions of possibility for our experience is coupled with an alteration of our relation to the world. In other words, transcendental philosophy entails transcendental idealism. But transcendental idealism is not a metaphysical position in itself. For, transcendental inquiry is a second-order inquiry into the conditions of possibility for our experience of objects and, thus, does not make any first-order claims about objects. Thus the alteration of our relation to the world that transcendental philosophy demands, namely transcendental idealism, is neither that of realism (if this is to entail any sort of alteration) nor idealism since both are first-order metaphysical positions that attempt to explain objects in a straightforward manner. Rather, it must be understood as a kind of reflective stance or a *methodological standpoint*. Now, this methodological stance entailed two important metaphysical implications: *anti-(naive-)realism* and *the priority of transcendental subjectivity*. Our discussion of the latter in the first section on transcendental foundationalism has already indicated that Heidegger's position in BT entails transcendental idealism. In the following, I will attempt to work out the full metaphysical implications of BT by addressing the following two questions: (1) can we say that Heidegger's project in BT entails a *methodological standpoint* rather than metaphysical position? (2) Does it entail *anti-(naive-)realism*?

Let us begin with our first question. To the extent that Heidegger distanced himself from traditional metaphysics, which attempted to explain being in terms of beings, it is clear that Heidegger's own position in BT is not itself a metaphysical position in that sense. Indeed, as I noted above, our discussion of the transcendental priority of Dasein has already suggested that Heidegger's position in BT is close to Kant's and Husserl's transcendental idealism as I delineated in Chapter 2, specifically, in not entailing a metaphysical position. Since Dasein's understanding of being is the condition of possibility for the being of entities and the world, this seems to entail transcendental idealism. Indeed, Heidegger seems to be affirming this when he says:

If what the term "idealism" says, amounts to the understanding that Being can never be explained by entities but is already that which is 'transcendental' for every entity, then idealism affords the only correct possibility for a philosophical problematic.¹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, there are certain passages in BT that challenge the idea that Heidegger is a transcendental idealist. For he sometimes says that the being of entities depends on Dasein's understanding of being *while entities themselves do not*: "Being (not entities) is dependent upon the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., *ibid.*

understanding of Being; that is to say, Reality (not the Real) is dependent upon care.”¹¹⁰ Taking such claims as directly indicative of Heidegger’s rejection of transcendental idealism, Herman Philipse argues that Heidegger is a transcendental realist (or what he also calls “weak transcendentalist”)¹¹¹. William Blattner and Cristina Lafont, on the other hand, have argued that these claims do not deter Heidegger from being committed to some version of transcendental idealism.¹¹² None of them are in disagreement that Heidegger attempts to show that Dasein’s understanding of being is the condition of possibility for entities to show up as entities, i.e. for the being of entities. The point of disagreement is whether Heidegger can still be a transcendental idealist whilst expressly denying that entities are dependent on Dasein’s understanding of being. Blattner offers an interesting solution to this problem. According to Blattner, Heidegger’s claim that entities are not dependent on Dasein’s being is an empirical claim that expresses the ontological sense of entities as being independent of Dasein. In other words, the claim indicates that Heidegger is an empirical realist. Furthermore, this claim has no relevance at the transcendental level since the very question of whether or not entities depend on Dasein simply does not make sense on the transcendental level. Thus, Blattner concludes that Heidegger is a transcendental idealist regarding being *but not entities*.¹¹³ As he says:

He [Heidegger] is a transcendental idealist about being, but not about entities. This is not because, from the transcendental standpoint, entities are independent of Dasein; it is not because he is a transcendental realist about entities. Rather, it is because one can be neither a transcendental idealist nor a transcendental realist about entities, if one is a transcendental idealist about being.¹¹⁴

Phlipse raises two powerful objections to this interpretation. Firstly, he argues that Heidegger’s claim that entities are not dependent on Dasein’s being cannot be *merely* an empirical claim because Heidegger puts forward the claim not only as “a thesis *within* the framework of occurrentness or ‘reality’ [...] but also as a general thesis about the relation among Dasein, entities, and sein.”¹¹⁵ Secondly, if it is nonsensical to raise transcendental questions about the relation between the understanding of being and entities as they are in themselves, apart from our understanding of being, then Heidegger’s transcendental

¹¹⁰ SZ, p. 212/255. Compare also: “[e]ntities *are*, quite independently of the experience by which they are disclosed, the acquaintance in which they are discovered, and the grasping in which their nature is ascertained. But Being ‘is’ only in the understanding of those entities to whose Being something like an understanding of Being belongs” (SZ, p. 183/228).

¹¹¹ Philipse 1999, §9, especially pp. 143-144; pp. 432-433 (note 258).

¹¹² Cf. Blattner 1999, especially pp. 251-254; Lafont 2007. Blattner argues for “temporal idealism” and Lafont argues for “hermeneutic idealism.”

¹¹³ Cf. Blattner 1999, pp. 244-254.

¹¹⁴ Blattner 1999, p. 253.

¹¹⁵ Philipse 1999, p. 433 (note 258)

position deflates into some form of subjective idealism that cannot provide any justification for how such an understanding of being is *really* about the world. As Philipse says, then, “one must conclude that Heidegger’s notion of a transcendental framework is nonsensical.”¹¹⁶ I agree with Philipse that Blattner’s interpretation of Heidegger’s position does not “save” Heidegger, although as Philipse himself admits, his alternative reading of him as a transcendental realist does not do so either. If Heidegger can be “saved,” that is, if he is to be a full-blown, consistent transcendental idealist, Heidegger must be a transcendental idealist about entities and not just their being. But how then are we to make sense of his claim that entities do not depend on Dasein?

I believe we can make sense of this claim by understanding it as a first-order claim about entities. Thus I am in agreement with Blattner that this claim expresses the being of entities understood from an empirical standpoint. Namely, from an empirical standpoint, entities exist independently of Dasein. However, I disagree with Blattner that this claim loses relevance at the transcendental level, i.e. that the question of whether entities depend on Dasein makes *no sense* on the transcendental level. On the contrary, from the transcendental standpoint, the *only* way to make sense of the question, and the only way in which it *must* make sense, is by understanding this as a second-order question regarding the ontological status of entities. Thus, the transcendental question asks whether the *being* of entities depends on Dasein’s being. Accordingly, from the transcendental standpoint, not only being but also “entities” depend on Dasein’s understanding of being because the transcendental question is simply asking about the *being of entities*. Moreover, this does not deny that we are asking about the relation between Dasein’s understanding of being and “entities as they are in themselves.” For, just as the noema *is* the object-that-is-intended in phenomenological reflection for Husserl, the being of entities *is* the entities as they are in themselves in the transcendental-reflective attitude. In this way, Heidegger is a transcendental idealist not only about being but also about entities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Ibid., *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Lafont offers an alternative reading by suggesting that we distinguish between being in the sense of “essence” and being in the sense of “existence.” This distinction allows us to maintain the intransitive depending-on relation on the transcendental level: “the essence of entities depends on Dasein, whereas their existence does not” (2007, p. 251, note 11). According to Lafont, this does not commit Heidegger to transcendental realism since “the claim that entities exist independently of Dasein entails only a commitment to the (ontologically very weak) claim that *something or other* exists, but it cannot entail what transcendental realism requires: a commitment to the existence of specific entities with specific essences” (2007, p. 252, note 11). The suggestion is supported by Heidegger’s following remarks in BT: “[w]ith Dasein’s factual existence, entities within-the-world are already encountered too. The fact that such entities are discovered along with Dasein’s own ‘there’ of existence, is not left to Dasein’s discretion. Only *what* it discovers and discloses on occasion, in *what* direction it does so, *how* and *how far* it does so – only these are matters for Dasein’s freedom, even if always within the limitations of its thrownness” (SZ, p. 266/417).

Now, insofar as transcendental idealism, when understood properly, entails not a metaphysical position but a methodological standpoint, Heidegger's transcendental idealism should entail the latter. Our investigation in this chapter has shown that the existential analytic of Dasein is certainly a methodological standpoint in the sense that it discloses the way to *understand* our relation to the world ontologically. Now, the pertinent question is: *what kind of "understanding" is this?* As we saw in our discussion of hermeneutic reflection, reflecting on Dasein's understanding of being as the condition of possibility for the being of entities and the world was not a theoretically detached method. For the existential analytic of Dasein is a matter of disclosing one's own factual situation *by staying in and going along* with one's factual life. Moreover, since the ontological understanding must be wrested from our everyday interpretation and seized upon as our own existentiell possibility of authentic self-understanding, the existential analytic is essentially a matter of *awakening* to one's factic situation. In this way, then, the existential analytic of Dasein is a reflective methodological method that takes its departure from Dasein's factual life and stays within it in order to disclose and awaken to one's factual situation.

Let us now turn to the question of *anti-(naive-)realism*. As we emphasized in Chapter 2, transcendental idealism can be negatively characterized as anti-realism or anti-naive-realism since this is one of its important metaphysical implications. Such nomenclature underscores how transcendental idealism prohibits our natural way of relating to the world. That this is a necessary counterpart to Heidegger's transcendental idealism should already be clear from our discussion so far. But we can also see evidence of Heidegger's anti-realism in §43 of BT, where he discusses the problems of realism and idealism. Realism, according to Heidegger, is the thesis that "the external world is Really present-at-hand."¹¹⁸ Now, insofar as Dasein's being, as being-in-the-world, can disclose entities within the world as present-at-hand, the results of the existential analytic of Dasein do not contradict the realism thesis. However, the problem with the realist position is that it does not understand the external world *as present-at-hand*. As Heidegger says, "in realism there is a lack of ontological understanding."¹¹⁹ Accordingly, instead of trying to articulate the ontological meaning of the real, "realism tries to explain Reality ontically by Real connections of interaction between things that are Real."¹²⁰ In this way, realism does not understand the ontological difference and therein lies the fatal sin of realism.

On the other hand, idealism is said to have an advantage in principle, that is, so long as it has not "misunderstood" itself as psychological idealism. Psychological idealism fares no better than realism since

¹¹⁸ SZ, p. 207/251.

¹¹⁹ SZ, p. 207/251.

¹²⁰ Ibid., *ibid.*

it attempts to explain reality through an entity, namely the mind. But, according to Heidegger, when idealism maintains that reality is only “in the consciousness,” this is expressive of the understanding that reality cannot be explained through entities. In other words, it is distancing itself from any first-order attempt to explain reality. Therefore, so long as idealism is attentive to the ontological difference between entities and their being, it is said to be in a better position than realism. Indeed, as we already saw, he even goes on to say that transcendental idealism is the “only correct possibility for a philosophical problematic.”¹²¹ Nonetheless, so long as idealism, transcendental or not, stops short of clarifying the meaning of the being of “subject” or “consciousness” such that it is, at best, described negatively as “un-thing-like,” it is said to be “no less naive in its method than the most grossly militant realism.”¹²² This can be understood as an implicit criticism of Kant’s and Husserl’s transcendental idealism, which has supposedly failed to clarify the ontological sense of “subject” and “consciousness.” Thus Heidegger says: “[i]f the idealist thesis is to be followed consistently, the ontological analysis of consciousness itself is prescribed as an inevitable prior task.”¹²³ Therefore, we can say that Heidegger’s anti-realism alters our relation to the world not by adopting an idealist position that stops short of clarifying the ontological sense of “subject” and “consciousness” but by undertaking an ontological analysis of *Dasein*. In the course of the analytic, we come to see the world through transcendental subjectivity (*Dasein*), one whose ontological constitution, however, is articulated as disclosedness to the world, factual, and is always already projecting its possibilities upon the world. In short, we come to see the world through *Dasein*’s *being-in-the-world*.

2. Heidegger’s hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy in BT

In this chapter, we have been examining Heidegger’s engagement with transcendental philosophy in light of the three criteria of transcendental philosophy. In the course of the investigation, it has become clear that Heidegger’s project in BT is transcendental insofar as it fulfills the three criteria: it is *foundational* in the sense that *Dasein* has transcendental priority over the world, it employs *transcendental reflection* to disclose the conditions of possibility for our experience and it brings about an *alteration of our relation to the world* from our naive belief in the independent existence of objects and the world to an understanding that world-disclosure depends on *Dasein*’s being. At the same time, however,

¹²¹ SZ, p. 208/251.

¹²² SZ, p. 208/252.

¹²³ Ibid., *ibid.*

we have also seen that Heidegger's hermeneutic method transforms transcendental philosophy in certain respects. By way of conclusion, then, let us draw out the essence of Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy based on our above discussion.

I believe we can identify the core of Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy in the *radicalness* of hermeneutic reflection. As we saw, hermeneutic reflection was the disclosing of and awakening to one's own factual situation. This specifically reflective character of the hermeneutic method transformed traditional forms of transcendental reflection in two essential ways. *Firstly*, as the disclosing of one's factual situation, transcendental reflection could no longer articulate the transcendental conditions in their universal validity, something that was essential to Kant's notion of a priori. To a certain extent, Husserl's phenomenology had already made this transformation since phenomenological reflection discloses the conditions of possibility for meaning, which already entails paying heed to the *contingencies* inherent in our embodied and embedded aspects of subjectivity.¹²⁴ Furthermore, since the phenomenological method is a "thoroughly intuitively disclosing method," that is, "intuitive in its point of departure and in everything it discloses," phenomenological findings are not incorrigible and infallible, as Drummond has pointed out.¹²⁵ Rather, they are essentially *inconclusive* and always liable to revision. In contrast to Kant's "constructively inferring [*schliessende*] method," as Husserl put it, phenomenology's "thoroughly intuitively disclosing [*erschliessende*] method" can be said to be more attentive to the circular nature of transcendental reflection, i.e. that "transcendental inquiry operates always from within experience and by appeal to experience."¹²⁶ In this way, phenomenology undercuts Kant's appeal to the a priori structures of subjectivity as unchanging and universally valid.

Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, however, radicalizes Husserl's phenomenological method by underlining the circular nature of transcendental-hermeneutic reflection *as the disclosing of one's own factual situation*.¹²⁷ In other words, hermeneutic reflection does not attempt to abstract from our everyday way of being in the world in order to disclose the transcendental dimensions but, rather, *it discloses itself in its transcendental constitution*. Thus, since there is no regress from the natural attitude of

¹²⁴ For the transcendental dimensions of embodiment and intersubjectivity in Husserl, see for example: Zahavi (1996), Heinämaa (2007), Taipale (2014).

¹²⁵ Drummond 1991. Cf. Hua VI, p. 118/115-116.

¹²⁶ Malpas 1997, p. 16.

¹²⁷ Recently, Simo Pulkkinen has argued that, for Husserl, transcendental subjectivity and its constitutive functioning are determined from the ground up by a radical historicity and facticity. More specifically, he attempts to show that the interplay of the two basic modes of consciousness, activity and passivity, "disclose[s] transcendental subjectivity as a fundamentally developing being – as a being that is in its constitutive functioning dynamically grounded upon its own past experiential life and, correlatively, situated in the world that it has already, at any given moment, learned to know by this past experience" (2014, p. 121).

the human being to the transcendently pure consciousness, the problem of how we can at once be a subject for the world and an object in the world does not arise. For it belongs to the ontological constitution of Dasein that it is at once thrown into the world and that which allows entities and the world to *be there* in the first place. Furthermore, since, for Heidegger, the transcendental turn is essentially a turn within the factual situation of Dasein, the problem of “including” the concrete dimensions of human life such as embodiment and intersubjectivity again do not arise since Dasein is essentially concrete. As Malpas has put it, hermeneutics is “essentially a matter of finding oneself *in one’s situatedness*”¹²⁸ and so, transcendental-hermeneutic reflection is essentially a matter of disclosing one’s transcendental constitution in one’s situatedness. Transcendental conditions and the constituting transcendental subjectivity are, accordingly, historically and factically contingent through and through.

Secondly, as an awakening to one’s factual situation, transcendental reflection is transformed from a theoretically detached method into an existentialist appropriating method, one that calls for an awakening to one’s own factic life. The second-order reflection on the conditions of possibility for our experience becomes a matter of countering the momentum of everyday fallenness and coming to an understanding of one’s being as essentially related to the world as both thrown and projecting, being-in-the-world and world-disclosing. Accordingly, engaging in transcendental thinking does not amount to engaging in a second-order reflection that can somehow be detached from our first-order engagement with the world. While transcendental-hermeneutic thinking is a second-order reflection, it does not detach from our everyday engagement with the world but, rather, takes hold of such engagement to exhibit it anew in its transcendental-ontological structure. Therefore, Heidegger’s hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy is nothing less than a result of the acknowledgment that, on the one hand, transcendental philosophy cannot escape the bounds of our factual situation and on the other hand, it belongs to our very facticity that we can alter our everyday relation to the world and come to see the world through Dasein’s being-in-the-world.

¹²⁸ Malpas (forthcoming), p. 14.

Part III: Nishida and transcendental philosophy in the late 1920s

Chapter 5: Nishida's early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare the grounds for the following chapter where we will be examining Nishida's critical engagement with transcendental philosophy in his early theory of *basho*. Nishida's "theory of *basho*" (*bashoron*¹) was first presented in an article published in 1926 titled "*Basho*." After writing this article, Nishida wrote to his student that he felt he had reached his "final standpoint."² In a certain sense, this was not entirely correct since, in the 1930s and '40s, he came to rework some aspects of the theory in light of his growing interest in the social and historical world. Nonetheless, his impression was right in that the idea of *basho* remained central for the rest of his philosophical career.

For the purpose of the present work, I will not be concerned with the later developments of the theory of *basho* in the 1930s and '40s. There are two reasons for this delimitation. First of all, Nishida's engagement with transcendental thinking is more evident in the earlier stage when Nishida's focus was on epistemological problematics. Second, the question of whether or not the later developments also entail the reworking of the transcendental is secondary to the question of whether the earlier theory of *basho* is transcendental or not. Accordingly, I have delimited the scope of my investigation not because I think the

¹ My rendering of "*bashoron*" (場所論) as "theory of *basho*" may be misleading in the sense that "theory" in English has a more specific meaning than "*ron*" (論) in Japanese. In fact, "theory" would more commonly be a translation of "*riron*" (literally, rational view). Thus, for a Japanese speaker, "theory of *basho*" may sound more like a rendering of "*basho no riron*." Nishida never used this phrase and probably rightly so insofar as "*riron*" connotes more of a scientific theory than a philosophical theory (e.g. *sōtaisei riron*, theory of relativity; *keizai riron*, economic theory, etc.). The "*ron*" in "*bashoron*" literally means opinion or view (as in *jiron* meaning one's own opinion and *yoron* public opinion) as well as discussion and reasoning (as in *giron* meaning discussion and *seiron* a fair or sound argument). When one combines this character "*ron*" with "*ri*," meaning reason or principle, one can get two words with different meanings: *riron* (theory) and *ronri* (logic). Interestingly, although Nishida never used "*riron*" to characterize his philosophy of *basho*, he does speak of "*basho no ronri*" or "*bashoteki ronri*" (logic of *basho*) to refer to his systematic attempt to articulate the structure of reality based on the concept of *basho*. The difference between "*bashoron*" and "*basho no ronri*" is subtle, and it is not clear whether Nishida himself clearly distinguished between the two phrases. However, one could argue that Nishida employed the latter when he wanted to emphasize that his philosophy of *basho* is a kind of "logic." One should not, however, understand this emphasis on logic as entailing that Nishida was primarily interested in the structure of arguments, as formal and modern logic are. Nishida's "*basho no ronri*" is rather interested in the logic of reality or the structures of reality. Nishida was emphatic, especially in the later period, that his "*basho no ronri*" is a "predicate-based logic" (*jyutsugoteki ronri*) that stands in opposition to the "subject-based logic" (*shugoteki ronri*) or "object-logic" (*taishō ronri*) that he saw as typical in Aristotle and that, according to Nishida, has pervaded the history of Western philosophy. For my purposes in this work, I have opted to refer to Nishida's systematic philosophy of *basho* as "*bashoron*" since I believe the connotation is slightly more comprehensive than "*basho no ronri*." Furthermore, I want to emphasize that my rendering of *bashoron* as "theory of *basho*" should accordingly be understood in the broad sense of the word, theory. In fact, "*bashoron*" can also be rendered as something like "*basho-logy*" since when used as a suffix, "*ron*" is often rendered as "-logy" (for example, *hōhōron* means methodology). But I have avoided such neologism for the sake of simplicity.

² Cf. Nishida's letter (dated June 8, 1926) to his student Mutai Risaku studying in Heidelberg at the time written soon after the initial publication of the essay, "*Basho*": NKZ 18, pp. 303-304.

later developments are irrelevant for my purposes but only because the earlier stage is more directly relevant and primary for determining the transcendental orientation of Nishida's theory of *basho*.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to articulate Nishida's theory of *basho* in its early stage of development in the late 1920s. I will begin by briefly outlining the trajectory of Nishida's thought up until the mid-1920s, namely from the earliest stage of "pure experience" to the subsequent stage of "*jikaku*." While Nishida soon dismisses these positions as inadequate, since his efforts culminate in his theory of *basho*, it is nonetheless essential that we understand the underlying problematics and issues. Therefore, although I will not go into the details, I will focus on the main points, problematics and issues of these earlier positions. Then, I will present Nishida's early theory of *basho* in two parts. First, we will look at its initial presentation in the latter half of *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927). Then, we will look at how Nishida further articulated this theory in *The Self-aware System of Universals* (1930).³

1. Towards the theory of *basho*

Nishida Kitarō⁴ (1870-1945), the most influential Japanese philosopher of the twentieth century, instigated the philosophical movement known as the Kyoto School. He belongs to the first generation of thinkers of the Meiji period (1868-1912) who contributed to importing Western ideas to Japan, including philosophy as an academic discipline, after over two centuries of national isolation. What marks the difference from other Meiji thinkers, however, is that he did not stop at mere importation. Rather, Nishida embarked on the task of constructing an original philosophical system that critically engages with Western philosophy in light of the Eastern intellectual heritage, particularly that of Mahayana Buddhism.⁵ It is in this sense that Nishida deserves to be called the first modern Japanese philosopher.⁶

³ Though this book was published in 1930, it is a collection of essays published between 1928 and 1929.

⁴ Japanese names are written in the Japanese order of family name, followed by given name.

⁵ In this way, Nishida can be said to have developed his philosophy between the East and the West and, thus, deserves to be called an "intercultural philosopher." Bret Davis has argued that Nishida, as well as other Kyoto school thinkers, are "philosophers of interculturality" in both senses of the genitive in this phrase: "[t]hey thought *from out of* their experience of the meeting of Eastern and Western cultures in modern Japan; and they thought *about* what a cross-cultural encounter does and should entail" (2011, p. 46). See also his essay "Opening up the West: Toward Dialogue with Japanese Philosophy" where he articulates the "inherently cross-cultural nature of Japanese philosophy" in contrast to the "lingering Ameri-Eurocentrism of Western philosophy" (2013, p. 57). For more on Nishida as an intercultural philosopher, see: Elberfeld (1999).

⁶ This point raises the long-discussed question in Japan of whether or not there was "philosophy" in pre-modern Japan. Already in the Meiji period, Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901) famously claimed that "there is no such thing as philosophy in Japan, neither in the past nor in the present" (Cf. Chōmin 1983, p. 155, my translation). For discussions of this, see: Maraldo & Nakajima (2011) and Maraldo (1995).

1.1. Stages in Nishida's thought

Let us first make note of the period I am focusing on in the trajectory of Nishida's thought. Nishida's philosophy has often been divided into several stages or periods in accordance with the development of his ideas. Commentators diverge in the way they divide the stages, from two or three to as many as five or six stages, depending on their specific interests and interpretations. While it is common to distinguish the early, mid and later periods of Nishida's thought, there is disagreement about where exactly the distinctions are to be drawn. Nishida himself distinguished several stages in the preface written for the reprint of the *Inquiry* a quarter century after its first publication:

In *Intuition and Reflection in Self-awareness* through the mediation of Fichte's *Tathandlung*, the standpoint of pure experience developed into the standpoint of absolute will. Then, in the second half of *From the Acting to the Seeing*, through the mediation of Greek philosophy, it took a turn to the idea of "*basho*". There, I found the clue to lay the logical base for my ideas. Then the idea of "*basho*" was concretized as the "dialectical universal" and that standpoint was given a direct expression, "acting-intuition."⁷

Depending on how one interprets the last sentence, one can extract four or five stages that correspond to four or five main concepts: (1) pure experience, (2) absolute will, (3) *basho*, (4) dialectical universal, (5) acting-intuition. John Krummel follows Nishida's general outline and sticks to a fourfold division, taking the last two concepts to constitute one period. Krummel accordingly takes the first four concepts above and distinguishes the stages of Nishida's lifework in the following way: (1) the psychologistic period (pure experience), (2) the voluntaristic period (absolute will and *jikaku*), (3) the epistemological period (*basho*), and (4) the dialectical period (dialectical universal, historical world, acting-intuition).⁸ According to this division, the first two periods would supposedly comprise the early period, the third would be called the mid period and the fourth, the later period of Nishida's thought.

Ueda Shizuteru, a prominent scholar of Nishida and sometimes referred to as the last Kyoto School philosopher, has followed a more simple threefold division in his presentation of Nishida's thought: (1) pure experience, (2) *jikaku*, and (3) *basho*. Ueda emphasizes that while it is possible to set these three stages out as distinct phases, they are not to be taken as isolated stages but must be understood more continuously, as one phase unfolding into the other phases. More specifically, Nishida's philosophy as a whole, according to Ueda, is the articulation of the idea of pure experience. As he says: "[a]lready in pure

⁷ NKZ 1, pp. 6-7/xxxii-xxxiii.

⁸ Krummel 2015, pp. 7-8.

experience, the movement towards *jikaku* and from *jikaku* to *basho* was already at play.”⁹ Therefore, Ueda understands Nishida’s philosophy as the dynamic development of the fundamental understanding already implicit in the idea of pure experience. As he says: “[w]hen one considers Nishida’s philosophy, one must look at the whole dynamic development that at least contains the turn from pure experience to *jikaku* and then to *basho*.”¹⁰

The difference between Krummel’s and Ueda’s interpretations basically comes down to how one interprets the nature of the later development of the theory of *basho* in the 1930s and ‘40s. According to Krummel, the later development reflects a significant change from his early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s. For Ueda, however, the basic structure of the theory of *basho* remains throughout. For the purpose of this work, however, it will not be necessary to determine whether Nishida’s development in the 1930s is a significant change in his thought or not. For my sole focus in this work is his early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s. Accordingly, it will be sufficient to acknowledge that, from the 1930s, Nishida reworks some aspects of the theory of *basho* without determining what implications these reworkings may have on his early theory of *basho*. We will thus work with a distinction between the early and later theory of *basho* while leaving open the question of whether or not this indicates a fourth stage in Nishida’s thought.

1.2. Pure experience

Nishida’s first attempt to systematically construct his philosophy was made in his maiden work, *An Inquiry into the Good*, of 1911 (hereafter, *Inquiry*). In the very beginning of the opening passage, Nishida explains his idea of “pure experience” (*junsui keiken*):

To experience means to know facts just as they are, to know in accordance with facts by completely relinquishing one’s own fabrications. What we usually refer to as experience is adulterated with some sort of thought, so by pure I am referring to the state of experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination. The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one’s own state of consciousness, there is not yet subject or object, and knowing and its object are completely unified.¹¹

⁹ Ueda 1991, p. 361. All quotations taken from works in Japanese are my own translations unless otherwise specified.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

¹¹ NKZ 1, p. 9/3-4.

As he states here, pure experience is our direct experience of reality prior to the subject-object distinction. For example, it is that experience in which one simply enjoys a piece of music as it unfolds without any thought about what kind of music it is or that I am currently listening to the music. Prior to conceptual understanding or any act of reflection, the reality of the music is experienced just as it manifests itself to consciousness.¹² To give another example, in the midst of reading an exciting novel, there is no conjecturing thought about the author's intentions or concerning idea that I should be reading Husserl instead. As soon as these thoughts arise, I am taken out of the state of pure experience. Now, the aim of the *Inquiry* was to show that this kind of direct, undifferentiated experience prior to the subject-object duality is the "sole reality" from which the rest of reality and experience is derived. As he says in the preface: "I would like to explain everything on the basis of pure experience as the sole reality."¹³

But, when put this way, a methodological tension inevitably arises. On the one hand, pure experience is said to be pre-conceptual and pre-reflective. It is prior to all differentiations that arise in reflection and conceptual articulation. Such pure experience is said to be the *sole* reality. Yet, on the other hand, Nishida is attempting to "explain," that is, conceptually articulate that such pure experience lies at the ground of all reality. This means that pure experience cannot merely be prior to conceptual understanding and reflection but must also contain the possibility of philosophical articulation. For how else can we talk about pure experience being the ground of reality? So then, without clarifying the ground of the possibility of philosophical reflection, the philosophical standpoint of pure experience remains unsatisfactory. Indeed, as has been pointed out by some commentators, one of the main problems with the *Inquiry* is that this problem was left undiscussed.¹⁴ As such, when reading the *Inquiry*, the reader is left with a sense that the work is highly speculative as Nishida does not clarify *how* he could say that pure experience is the "sole reality."

This methodological problem is coupled with a more general concern regarding Nishida's explanation of knowledge. In the *Inquiry*, Nishida argued that pure experience is the undifferentiated ground that provides unity to the various differentiations in more derivative forms of our experience, including judgments. As such, pure experience is said to be the "unifying act" (*tōitsu sayō*) or "that which unifies reality" (*tōitsuteki arumono*). Thus Nishida says: "[a]t the base of thinking there is always a certain

¹² Compare Nishida's following depiction of pure experience: "[j]ust like when we become enraptured by exquisite music, forget ourselves and everything around us, and experience the universe as one melodious sound, true reality presents itself in the moment of direct experience. Should the thought arise that the music is the vibration of air or that one is listening to music, at that point one has already separated oneself from true reality because that thought derives from reflection and thinking divorced from the true state of the reality of the music" (NKZ 1, pp. 59-60/48).

¹³ NKZ 1, p. 4/1990, p. xxx.

¹⁴ Cf. Ueda 1991, pp. 166-169, pp.279-280; Nitta 1998, pp. 5-10.

unifying reality [*tōitsuteki arumono*] that we can know only through intuition. Judgment arises from the analysis of this intuition.”¹⁵ But if this “unifying reality” is a kind of intuitive experience, how could the objective validity or knowledge be grounded in such experiential fact? Is Nishida here trying to reduce cognition to psychological processes? If so, is he not falling into psychologism, namely misidentifying logical laws with psychological laws?¹⁶

To begin with, pure experience clearly cannot be identified with a psychological state since to do so would already be to presuppose the subject-object duality. Nevertheless, Nishida almost exclusively employs psychological language in his explanations of pure experience such that it is difficult to see what else it could be but a psychological state. For example, Nishida claims that the unifying act or unifying reality is normally “subconscious” and can only be “intuited” in specific forms of our experience such as the know-how of skillful coping or the artist’s creation of a work without the least bit of deliberation.¹⁷ Accordingly, unifying acts are explained as a kind of subconscious state that can only be brought to our awareness in specific kinds of experience.¹⁸ But if this is the case, it is not at all clear why such subconscious or special experience should be the *necessary* ground of reality and knowledge. Nishida’s problem, then, was that his psychologistic explanations were not capable of demonstrating how pure experience is the necessary ground of the unity of reality and our knowledge.¹⁹

Nishida’s main problem in the *Inquiry*, then, was that it was not clear how pre-conceptual and pre-reflective pure experience could be said to ground conceptual knowledge. In order to provide a philosophically grounded account of how “pure experience is the sole reality,” Nishida needed to

¹⁵ NKZ 1, p. 51/41.

¹⁶ Nishida’s understanding of psychologism was mainly based on the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert’s critique of psychologistic approaches to epistemology. A few months after the publication of *Inquiry*, Nishida published an essay titled “On the Claims of the Pure Logicians in Epistemology” (1911). There, he presents Rickert’s arguments in *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, 2nd edition (1904) and “Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie. Transcendentalpsychologie und Transcendentallogik” (1909). In the essay, he also mentions Husserl as another “pure logicist” but does not refer to his critique of psychologism. In fact, Nishida’s knowledge of Husserl seems to have been limited at the time. As he says, “[a]s far as I can tell, Rickert and Husserl broadly belong to the same camp.” He also notes his impression that Rickert, coming from Kant, better articulates epistemological problems (NKZ 1, p. 222).

¹⁷ Cf. NKZ 1, p. 43/32. Here, Nishida speaks of this ideal intuition as a form of “intellectual intuition”: “[j]ust as ordinary perception is considered merely passive, so is intellectual intuition considered a state of passive contemplation; however, a true intellectual intuition is the unifying activity in pure experience. It is a grasp of life, like having the knack of an art or, more profoundly, the aesthetic spirit. For example, when inspiration arises in a painter and the brush moves spontaneously, a unifying reality is operating behind this complex activity.”

¹⁸ Cf. Nitta 1998, p. 9.

¹⁹ Nishida later admits that the standpoint of pure experience was in some sense psychologistic. In the preface to the new edition of the *Inquiry* in 1936, he writes: “[l]ooking at it from today, the standpoint in this work may be called the standpoint of consciousness. It may also be called psychologistic. Such criticisms are inevitable. Nonetheless, even then, what lay deep down in my thoughts were not merely psychological” (NKZ 1, p. 6/xxxi-xxxii).

understand this ground of reality not merely as pre-conceptual and pre-reflective but also as including the possibility of grounding knowledge. Together with this, he also needed to develop a philosophical method that clears him of psychologistic tendencies. In fact, all of Nishida's subsequent works can be understood as efforts to resolve these very issues that sprung from the *Inquiry*.

The two pressing questions that would occupy Nishida after the *Inquiry* were: *how could knowledge be grounded in the experience prior to the subject-object split?* And *what is the nature of philosophical reflection that articulates this grounding relation?* Nishida eventually stops using the term "pure experience" and, instead, attempts to resolve these issues on the basis of the structure of *jikaku* (self-awareness). This, however, will also end in failure. The resolution of this problem had to wait until his theory of *basho*. But, before we turn to *basho*, let us briefly run through his idea of *jikaku*, from which his idea of *basho* emerged.

1.3. *Jikaku*

Soon after the *Inquiry*, Nishida came to formulate his problem in terms of the relation between "intuition" and "reflection." By "intuition," Nishida means the experience of the unity between knower and known. "Reflection," on the other hand, is a kind of experience that disrupts this unity and brings out the differentiation between knower and known. Thus, Nishida says at the beginning of *Intuition and Reflection in Self-awareness* (1917):

Intuition is a consciousness of unbroken progression, of reality just as it is, wherein subject and object are not as yet divided and that which knows and that which is known are one. *Reflection* is a consciousness which, standing outside of this progression, turns around and views it. [...] But how is such reflection possible since we can never leave the actuality of intuition? How is reflection related to intuition?²⁰

According to Nishida, even when reflection brings about this differentiation between knower and known, one does not thereby leave the "actuality of intuition," that is, the experience of their unity. But then, the questions arise: how is reflection possible? And what is its relation to intuition?

Right after the above quotation, Nishida states that this relation can be clarified by examining the structure of "*jikaku*" or "self-awareness." By "*jikaku*," Nishida has in mind a particular kind of self-awareness whereby I am not merely pre-reflectively self-aware but, rather, I am aware of myself through

²⁰ NKZ 2, p. 15/3.

reflection. This kind of self-awareness is taken as the clue to understanding the relation between intuition and reflection since, in *jikaku*, I reflect on myself while, at the same time, I am intuitively aware that knower and known are one, i.e. “I” *am* “myself.” In this way, intuition and reflection are two moments in the structure of *jikaku*. But given that intuition and reflection are somehow internally related in *jikaku*, how does this structure of self-awareness articulate the relation between them in general?

As Nishida expressly states in the preface to *Intuition and Reflection in Self-awareness* (hereafter, *Intuition and Reflection*), his aim in these essays was to rethink reality in light of the “structure of the self-aware system” (*jikakuteki taikei no keishiki*). In other words, instead of starting with pure experience, Nishida now starts with the idea of *jikaku* and seeks to ground reality and knowledge based on this idea. The work is a collection of essays published between 1913 and 1917 and is a result of his arduous efforts in this attempt. In doing so, he engages with a wide range of thinkers from Bergson to Cohen, Husserl and also Fichte, which also contributes to the difficulty of the text. After these years of continuous thinking and rethinking, Nishida was to confess that, at the end of the journey, he had not succeeded in what he had attempted to do.²¹ Yet, the idea of *jikaku* was to remain pivotal for Nishida even after he gives up his position in *Intuition and Reflection*. This is evident in the fact that the term “*jikaku*” remained a key term for Nishida throughout his subsequent works, unlike “pure experience,” which he eventually stopped using after the *Inquiry*. For our purposes, it will not be necessary to go into the details of the work. Instead, let us clarify the following two points which are important for understanding the transition to the theory of *basho*: (1) the meaning of the Japanese word “*jikaku*” has unique connotations that are not present in its English translations, “self-awareness” or “self-consciousness” and (2) through the work of Josiah Royce, Nishida came to understand *jikaku* as a “self-representative system.”

²¹ In the preface to *Intuition and Reflection*, he says: “[t]his work is a document of a hard-fought battle of thought. I must admit that after many tortuous turns I have finally been unable to arrive at any new ideas or solutions” (NKZ 2, p. 11/xxiii). In the preface to the revised edition written in 1941, he repeats this point and writes that the significance of the work lies only in the fact that it comprises a phase in the development of his thought: “[t]oday, probably the only significance of this work is that it represents one stage in my intellectual development. Though I reread this work in preparation for the revised edition, it is so distant from my present philosophical position as to make it impossible for me to add anything. As I look back over this document of thirty years ago representing my hard-fought battle over several years, I cannot but have the feeling of exertion expressed by the famous phrase, ‘I have had fierce struggles, Descending into the dragon’s cave for you’” (NKZ 2, 13/xxvi).

1.3.1. The meaning of “jikaku”

Japanese uses “jikaku” in ordinary speech. It is comprised of two sinographs, *ji* (自, self) and *kaku* (覚, enlightenment or awakening). As the meanings of these sinographs already indicate, the word is originally a Buddhist term that means “self-awakening” or “self-realization.”²² Although this religious meaning is lost in everyday speech, the word still carries the sense of coming to a realization and is often used with a normative connotation. For example, when politicians are exposed for their engagement in some corrupt practice, the media bashes them for their *lack of jikaku as government officials*. Or, when one becomes a parent, one might say to oneself that I must now *take up jikaku as a mother or father*, meaning that one should raise one’s awareness of one’s new role and social norms. In English, we can also speak of raising or lacking awareness about something, as in raising people’s awareness of gender equality. Nonetheless, the English word “self-awareness” does not necessarily have this connotation. In contrast, we can say that this connotation is essential to the word “jikaku.” Namely, “to take up *jikaku* as a mother” is to raise awareness of the social norms that are involved in being a mother and, accordingly, to adapt to the new manner of being. Accordingly, “*jikaku suru*” (to become self-aware) or “*jikaku shiteiru*” (to be self-aware) means that one is or becomes aware of one’s manner of being in such a way that this self-understanding is appropriated in one’s manner of being. Therefore, as Andrew Feenberg points out, whereas the word “self-consciousness” (and, I would add, self-awareness) is employed in English and German to refer to “the purely contemplative self-directed awareness,” the word “jikaku” in Japanese denotes “the achievement of a deep realization or understanding of a matter, with the implication that such understanding affects and alters the self.”²³ Feenberg’s description highlights another important point, namely that *jikaku* implies one’s *openness to the world*. In order to be able to raise or lack awareness about something, one cannot be self-contained and closed from the surrounding world but must be open to it. Moreover, one must be open in such a way that one comes to *self-understanding* through the understanding of the social world. This is to say that the kind of understanding that is at issue here cannot be detached from one’s self-understanding but, rather, must necessarily have some bearing on it. In this way, as Feenberg says, in *jikaku*, “a deep realization or understanding of a matter” implies that “such understanding affects and alters the self.”

²² See Uehara Mayuko’s article, “The Conceptualization and Translation of *Jikaku* and *Jiko* in Nishida Kitarō,” where she notes on the structural similarities between Nishida’s *jikaku* and the Buddhist idea of enlightenment. The essay sheds light on Nishida’s notion of *jikaku*, as well as its correlative term “*jiko*” (self), specifically from the perspective of translation. See also Marldo’s article, “Translating Nishida,” which highlights some important issues pertaining to translating Nishida’s works.

²³ Feenberg 1999, p. 34.

1.3.2. *Jikaku as a “self-representative system”*

In the preface to *Intuition and Reflection*, Nishida claims that the kind of *jikaku* he has in mind is not the kind of self-consciousness that psychologists speak of but, rather, the “*jikaku* of a transcendental ego, similar to Fichte’s *Tathandlung*.”²⁴ He then says that he found inspiration for this understanding of *jikaku* in the work of Josiah Royce. More specifically, it was Royce’s way of understanding the infinite activity of reflection through what he called a “self-representative system” that gave Nishida the idea of articulating the structure of *jikaku*. Let us look at Nishida’s reference to Royce at the beginning of *Intuition and Reflection*:

The self’s reflection on the self, its reflecting (in the sense of mirroring) itself, cannot be brought to a halt at this point, for self-reflection consists in an unending process of unification, and, as Royce saw, a single project of reflecting the self inevitably generates an unlimited series, just as, if one wished to make a complete map of England from within England, each realization of this plan would immediately generate the project of another map including the previous one within itself in a never-ending process; or just as an object placed between two bright mirrors must project its image infinitely.²⁵

In *The World and the Individual* (1899), Royce employs the example of the “perfect map” to illustrate what he calls a self-representative system, i.e. “a system that can be exactly represented or imaged, element for element, by one of its own constituent parts.”²⁶ Royce defines a perfect map as a map where there is a one-to-one correspondence between each and every part of the surface that is mapped and the representation. Drawing a map from outside the mapped region would not be self-representative since the map itself is not part of the represented region. But, he asks, what if one were to draw a perfect map *from within and on the surface of the region that is to be mapped*? What if one were to draw a perfect map of England from within England? In order for the map to be “perfect,” it would have to contain a representation of itself within the map. Yet the representation itself would have to contain a further representation of itself and so on *ad infinitum*. Accordingly, such an infinite project of making a perfect map from within the mapped region exemplifies a self-representative system.²⁷

²⁴ NKZ 2, p. 3/xix.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 16/4.

²⁶ Royce 1899, p. 512. Royce appropriated Dedekind and Cantor’s idea of an infinite series. For a closer reading of this appropriation, specifically in relation to Nishida, see: Ōhashi (1995, pp. 61-68); Maraldo (2006).

²⁷ Royce 1899, pp. 503-504.

Taking this idea from Royce, Nishida understood *jikaku* as a kind of self-representative system that reflects itself within itself infinitely.²⁸ Furthermore, it is not merely an infinite series of reflection but the reflection is self-producing, i.e. the infinite activity of reflection produces the self. It is not as if there is a “self” that then produces itself but, rather, the self is created through the infinite series of reflection. In this way, *jikaku* comes close to Fichte’s notion of *Tathandlung* (fact/act), whereby self-consciousness is understood as both the “act” of self-positing and the “fact” or product of the act itself. In other words, through the self-positing act, one becomes aware of and produces oneself.²⁹

According to Nishida’s self-assessment, his efforts to ground reality in the idea of *jikaku* were unsuccessful. In 1935, looking back at the course of his thinking, he writes: “[n]either pure experience nor *Tathandlung*, at bottom, could escape subjectivism. I finally found the logically grounded starting point via Aristotle’s *hypokeimenon*.”³⁰ Although Nishida here identifies “subjectivism” as the common issue for both pure experience and *jikaku* (he is here identifying *jikaku* with Fichte’s *Tathandlung*), it is important to see that two different kinds of subjectivism are involved. On the one hand, “pure experience” was problematic because of its psychologistic overtones. In this way, the standpoint of pure experience could not adequately distinguish itself from *psychological subjectivism*. On the other hand, insofar as “*jikaku*” was clearly distinguished from psychological or empirical self-consciousness from the outset, it did not suffer from the same problem as pure experience. Nishida had overcome the shortcomings of pure experience by adopting a transcendental standpoint akin to Fichte’s position. But then, in what way was it still “subjectivistic”? This was presumably because, at the end of *Intuition and Reflection*, Nishida came to understand the transcendental standpoint as “absolute will” or “absolute free will.”³¹ The last couple of essays that comprise the conclusion are accordingly devoted to understanding the relation between intuition and reflection from the standpoint of absolute will, namely from the transcendental unity of will. Though this will was nothing “subjective,” in the sense that Nishida did not understand it as the activity of an individual subject, it was nonetheless “subjectivistic” in the sense that reality was a creation of this

²⁸ For a closer reading of how Nishida comes to appropriate Royce’s idea of a self-representative system, see: Maraldo (2006).

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of Nishida’s relationship to Fichte’s philosophy, see: Okada (2000).

³⁰ NKZ 13, p. 219. The quotation is taken from the preface he writes to Kōyama Iwao’s book, *Nishida tetsugaku* [Nishida’s Philosophy] (1935).

³¹ Nishida later says that his position in *Intuition and Reflection* was “a kind of voluntarist position like that of Fichte’s” (NKZ 4, p. 3). Accordingly, it has become commonplace in the literature to say that, with this idea of absolute will, Nishida adopts Fichte’s view of the primacy of the will over the intellect. However, Itabashi has pointed out that Fichte himself does not thematize the will in his *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. It was rather Nishida’s interpretation that Fichte’s idea of *Tathandlung* implies the primacy of the will (2004, pp. 91-92).

absolute will. As Nishida says: “[i]n the standpoint of the will, we can freely create reality,”³² or, “[i]n the immediate world of absolute will [...] there is no time, space or causation. In this world, even the natural world, which we think of as the only real one, becomes a symbol.”³³ Therefore, we can say that the problem with the standpoint of *jikaku* was that it implied a kind of *transcendental subjectivism*, that is, a strong version of transcendental idealism whereby the “transcendental will” creates reality. Accordingly, Nishida had to give up *jikaku* since transcendental subjectivism does not adequately demonstrate the objective validity of knowledge. Thus, neither psychological subjectivism nor transcendental subjectivism could adequately articulate how knowledge and reality are grounded in experience prior to the subject-object split. Nishida had yet to provide an adequate account of this together with an account of philosophical method that clarifies this grounding relation.³⁴

2. Theory of *basho* in *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927)

2.1. The meaning of “*basho*”

Before we examine Nishida’s theory of *basho* as it first developed in *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927) and other essays from that period, let us first clarify the meaning of the Japanese word, “*basho*,” as we did for “*jikaku*.” To begin with, the word *basho* (場所) is comprised of two sinographs, *ba* (場) and *sho* (所) that both signify “place.” Moreover, both *ba* (場) and *tokoro* (ところ, the alternative way of reading *sho* (所), which comes from the original Japanese meaning of the word) can be employed on their own with a slight difference in nuance between them, either taken separately or together. *Basho* can be translated into English as “place.” Like “place,” *basho* is a word used in everyday speech. They also have similar connotations. For example, I would refer to the Philosopher’s Path in Kyoto (Nishida often walked this path as he contemplated various philosophical issues), by saying, “*koko wa watashi no tokubetsu na basho desu*,” which means, “This is my special *place*.” Moreover, just as “place” can be conceptually distinguished from “space” as a mathematical or geographical concept, *basho* in Japanese is also conceptually distinguished from *kūkan* (空間), which more or less correlates with “space” in English. One could arguably say that, while *kūkan* connotes a physical space or location understood as a physical place,

³² NKZ 2, p. 269/133.

³³ Ibid., p. 345/167.

³⁴ Itabashi has provided a detailed account of how Nishida had attempted to clarify the philosophical standpoint of *jikaku* (in the period from *Intuition and Reflection* to the early 1920s) and why it had to fail. See: 2004, chapter 2.

basho in ordinary language is suggestive of a socially and historically embedded meaningful context and hence of having an intricate relation to the way *we* interact in the place.

Nishida also clearly distinguished his notion of *basho* from *kūkan*. But the way in which he employs the term “*basho*” goes far beyond the way we would normally use the word, as when he speaks of the “*basho* of nothingness” (*mu no basho*), “logic of *basho*” (*bashoteki ronri*), “dialectic of *basho*” (*bashoteki beshōhō*), etc. It is therefore understandable if one were to get the impression that Nishida’s concept of *basho* is a philosophically constructed concept having little to do with our ordinary conception of the term. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that in making *basho* a philosophical concept, Nishida is not thereby abstracting from, but rather deepening, our ordinary understanding of *basho* as a socially and historically embedded meaningful context. This is an important point worth underlining since the way Nishida employs the concept is often rather abstract, especially in the earlier period when *basho* was initially introduced.

2.2. The place of *jikaku*

As we saw in the previous section, after the *Inquiry*, Nishida attempted to articulate the ground of knowledge and reality on the basis of the structure of *jikaku*. At this point, *jikaku* or self-awareness was understood as the infinite activity of reflection. But eventually, Nishida came to realize that self-awareness is not possible without a “place” *wherein* one becomes aware. Nishida’s “discovery” of place is thus the realization that the structure of *jikaku* already implies the idea of place. We will turn to this point shortly. But before we do so, let us take a look at a concrete case of *jikaku*, that is, a form of *jikaku* in the everyday social context. For in fact, already in our everyday usage of the word *jikaku*, we can see how the idea of place is implied in it. Although this was not Nishida’s way of arriving at the idea of *basho*, looking at a concrete case will help us understand the matter at hand.

As we saw earlier, *jikaku* connotes coming to a deeper understanding about something such that this understanding involves coming to a deeper understanding of oneself. And we also saw that this entails that one must be open to the surrounding world. This then already indicates how *jikaku* implies place. For to raise one’s awareness about something, and indeed to be self-aware at all in the sense of *jikaku*, is to be disclosed to some particular *place*, i.e. meaningful context. Let us now see how this is really the case by looking at an example: my *jikaku* as a PhD student in philosophy. What is involved in this *jikaku*? To be aware of myself as a PhD student in philosophy is to understand myself as being in a specific meaningful context, e.g. philosophical community, university, academic society, etc. This involves

understanding the specific norms that are constitutive of being a member of the philosophical community, university and so on. However, merely understanding that is not sufficient for my *jikaku* as a philosophy PhD student, just as merely understanding what it means to be a mother, what is involved in motherhood, etc., is not sufficient for *jikaku* as a mother. For *jikaku* connotes a kind of deeper understanding not merely of some subject matter but also of oneself. As such, these understandings must reflect back on my self-understanding such that I do not merely understand what it is to be a member of this community but, rather, understand *myself* as a member of this community. And this means that such understanding is reflected in the way I act, namely in carrying out my research, engaging in discussions, participating in conferences, etc. Thus to be self-aware in the sense of *jikaku* is to play out one's role as a member of a community or, as we say in English, *to understand one's place* (but without the connotation that comes with the phrase that that 'place' is somehow fixed). In this way, then, "place" is implied in our everyday conception of *jikaku*.

Let us now turn to Nishida. In his essay, "On Internal Perception," from 1924, two years prior to the publication of "*Basho*," he mentions *basho* in the context of *jikaku*:

The self reflects itself inside itself. The mirror that reflects the content of the self is none other than itself. [...] Commonly, *jikaku* (self-awareness) is understood as the unity of the knower and known. Yet I believe true *jikaku* is knowing oneself *within oneself*. [...] For there to be self-awareness, they [knower and known] must be accompanied by "*within the self*". *Jikaku is the unity of the knowing self, the known self and the basho [place] wherein the self knows oneself*.³⁵

This is where "*basho*" with its specific meaning makes its first appearance in Nishida's text. It is introduced as the third element of self-awareness alongside the subject and the object of awareness, i.e. the knower and the known. The unity of knower and known is said to assume the place wherein the unity is made possible. Later on, *jikaku* is given the following concise formulation whereby the place of self-awareness is explicitly articulated as the "within": *the self reflects or mirrors itself within the self (jikoga jikonioite jiko o utsusu)*.³⁶

³⁵ NKZ 4, p. 127 (my emphasis).

³⁶ The word "*utsusu*" in Japanese can be written in three different ways, employing three different sinographs: "写す", "映す" and "移す". Nishida employs only the first two, "写す" and "映す". Although the two meanings are very close, they nonetheless have slightly different connotations. The first, "写す," connotes transferring or copying one thing to another. Thus, a photograph is *shashin* (写真), literally meaning the transference of the true or real. The second, "映す," connotes mirroring or projecting some thing on the surface of something else, as in "映画" (*eiga*, movie), which literally means the projection of drawing or art. Despite the slight variations in their connotations, however, both "写す" and "映す" mean *mirroring or reflecting*. Thus, in the context of Nishida's works, the common rendering of the word "*utsusu*" into English is "to reflect" or "to mirror." Here, I have juxtaposed both but in what follows, for the sake of

As the above quotation indicates, and as we mentioned earlier, *basho* was initially introduced in the context of *jikaku* understood as a basic form of self-awareness, more in line with the issue of self-consciousness as traditionally construed. One may accordingly wonder in what sense self-awareness at this more basic level presupposes the notion of place. In order to see this, let us recall Nishida's reference to Royce's example of drawing a complete map of England from within England. In *Intuition and Reflection*, Nishida employed Royce's example of the perfect map to draw an analogy with the structure of self-awareness as involving an infinite series of self-reflection or self-mirroring whereby the representation contains a further representation of itself and so on. At this point, the *place* of self-awareness within which this process occurs was not yet articulated. But as Ueda rightly points out, the idea of place was already tacit in the example and also, for that matter, in Royce's illustration of the perfect map, as we will see below.³⁷ This is an important point since it indicates how Nishida's idea of *basho* developed from understanding the *place* of *jikaku*.

In his analysis of the analogy, Ueda first asks: *what is it that corresponds to the "self" of self-reflection in the map example?*³⁸ If it were England, the analogy would be straightforward: England reflects itself within itself. However, in Royce's example, it is the *map-maker* who is in England that is representing the surface of England, of which she is a part. But then the analogy does not seem to work since the map-maker is representing something that she is part of but that is nonetheless external to her. Accordingly, in Royce's example, the map-maker is left out of the representation of England as the vantage point that necessarily lies outside the map. Nonetheless, there is an important sense in which the map-maker is in fact implied in this map making process. For the condition that makes the perfect map precisely a case of a self-representative system is that it is drawn from within the region to be drawn. In other words, it was conditional on the *map-maker's being situated in England*. If the map-maker were drawing a map of England from outside England, she could in principle draw a perfect map of England without thereby

simplicity, I will just opt for one of the two or merely use the rendering, "to reflect." However, it is important to keep in mind that the original meaning of the word "*utsusu*" (both "写す" and "映す") in Japanese connotes *mirroring*, as in the phrases, "the mirroring of the moon on the surface of the water" (*minamo ni utsusareta tsuki*) or "the self-reflection (self-mirroring) in the mirror" (*kagami ni utsusareta jibun no sugata*). Accordingly, it is important to note that "to reflect" as the rendering of "*utsusu*" does not primarily connote the intellectual activity of reflection for Nishida. In fact, to refer to the intellectual activity of reflection, Nishida uses a different word, "*hansei*," as in the title of the work, *Intuition and Reflection in Self-awareness* (*jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei*). Furthermore, although Nishida himself does not use the third sense of "*utsusu*" (移す), some commentators use all three to articulate his position (e.g. Ōhashi 1995, p. 77). *Utsusu* in the sense of "移す" connotes moving some thing to another location. Thus, "移動" (*idou*) means the movement, transfer, or relocation of something or someone. Nishida most likely did not employ this sense so much since it does not have the connotation of mirroring and reflecting as the other two do.

³⁷ Ueda 1991, pp. 307-313.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

lapsing into an infinite series of representations. Such a perfect map, however, would not exemplify a self-representative system. In this sense, then, the map-maker and her situatedness in England are implied in the example, though Royce makes no explicit mention of this situatedness.

But if this is so, returning to Ueda's question, what corresponds to the "self" in self-reflection? Ueda suggests that it is the map-maker, *but only insofar as she is understood as necessarily situated in England*.³⁹ In other words, it is the map-maker *as situated in England* that represents England, which she is part of. This representation, furthermore, includes a representation of herself insofar as her being in England is part of the representation of England. Thus the map-maker's representation of England is analogous to self-reflection insofar as it is a specific kind of *self-representation*. For the map-maker represents England as the place in which she is situated and hence includes a representation of herself as situated in England. Moreover, Ueda accordingly suggests that the "self" in self-reflection can also be said to correspond to the map-maker *and England* in their intricate involvement.⁴⁰ The important point is that the map-maker and England are understood not as existing independently of each other but, rather, as existing inter-dependently, i.e. the map maker is understood as situated in England and, accordingly, England is understood as the situated place of the map-maker.

Now, what the analogy in fact shows is that the notion of place is necessarily implied in self-awareness so long as we understand self-awareness as a self-representative system or an infinite series of self-reflection. For just as the perfect map example was conditional on the situatedness of the map-maker in the mapped region, self-awareness is conditional on the *situatedness of the self in one's situated place*. Thus, self-reflection is not just the self reflecting on itself but, rather, the self reflecting on itself *in one's situated place*. Based on this understanding, Nishida formulates self-awareness as: "the self reflects itself within the self."

But when *jikaku* is formulated this way, namely as the self reflecting itself *within the self*, this seems to entail that reflection occurs within an enclosed self and hence that self-awareness is a closed system. The expression is somewhat misleading since it certainly sounds as if self-reflection occurs within an enclosed self. However, what Nishida really means is the opposite. As Ueda suggests, "within the self" should be understood as "being open to the place wherein the self is situated."⁴¹ Our earlier examples of more concrete forms of *jikaku* have already indicated that *jikaku* would not be possible if one were self-enclosed. For it is only by being open to the philosophical community and so on that I can understand

³⁹ Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁰ Ibid., ibid.

⁴¹ Ueda 1991, pp. 318-319. Compare also his statement that "'within the self' [*jiko ni oite*] indicates the original implaceness [*genponteki bashosei*] of the 'self' of self-awareness." (1991, p. 311).

what it means to be a member of this community *and* for such understanding to reflect back on my self-understanding. If I were closed off to the community, I might still come to some sort of understanding of it but it would not thereby affect my own self (at least in the way it does so in *jikaku*). Therefore, the self in self-awareness is necessarily situated and thus open to the surrounding world.

Furthermore, when we understand self-awareness in this way, namely as defined by this openness, we can see that Nishida's idea of *jikaku* is similar to Dasein's understanding of being. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world was constitutive of Dasein's understanding of being. This is to say that Dasein, as "being-there," is *disclosed* as being-in-the-world: "disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] is that basic character of Dasein according to which it *is* its 'there.'"⁴² For Nishida too, being disclosed to one's place is constitutive of *jikaku* in the sense that self-awareness signifies being open to the place. Both Heidegger and Nishida, then, understand the self in terms of an essential openness. And accordingly, for both, "being-in" signifies "being open to the place."

2.3. Self-mirroring structure of *jikaku* as the structure of knowledge in general

The discovery of the idea of place through the analysis of the structure of self-awareness, namely as the *place of jikaku*, was a revelation for Nishida in many respects. Nishida himself attests that, with *basho*, he had finally arrived at the "final standpoint" (*saishū no tachiba*) from which he could then systematically reconstruct his earlier ideas.⁴³ As I have already mentioned, however, since Nishida continued to develop his ideas in his subsequent works, this was not entirely correct. Nonetheless, to the extent that his later developments were developments of the idea of *basho*, he was also right. Let us quote again from the preface to the reprint of the *Inquiry*:

[I]n the second half of *From the Acting to the Seeing*, through the mediation of Greek philosophy, it [my thought] took a turn to the idea of "*basho*". There, I found the clue to lay the logical base for my ideas.⁴⁴

Here, Nishida expresses the significance of the idea of *basho* in the trajectory of his thought by stating that, with the idea of *basho*, his thought underwent a "turn." Not surprisingly, commentators have spent much time unraveling the sense of this "turn," whether it signifies a *turn away from* his earlier views or whether it is more like a *turn within* and hence more a radicalization than an abandonment of his earlier thought. I

⁴² GA 2, p. 292/263.

⁴³ NKZ 18, pp. 303-304.

⁴⁴ NKZ 1, pp. 6-7/xxxii.

will not attempt to provide a detailed account of my interpretation of this issue since it is not in the interest of this work to do so. Thus suffice it to say that, insofar as the idea of *basho* originated from his reflections on the structure of *jikaku* in which *basho* was already implicit, it seems reasonable to claim that the turn to *basho* is more a deepening than a rejection of his earlier views. We can adopt Ueda's language and suggest that it is a "turn" (*kaiten*) in the sense of rotation around an axis, the development of a core idea.⁴⁵ I would just add that, with the idea of *basho*, such spinning gained a stability that his earlier views lacked.

But whatever the nature of this turn was, it was a pivotal breakthrough for Nishida. As we saw earlier, in the years following the publication of the *Inquiry*, Nishida was occupied with the following questions: *how could knowledge be grounded in experience prior to the subject-object split? And what is the nature of philosophical reflection that articulates this grounding relation?* But neither pure experience nor *jikaku* provided adequate answers to these problems. It is here that the last sentence of the above quotation proves its importance. For Nishida believed that, with the idea of *basho*, he had finally found the way to provide a "logical" (as opposed to psychological or subjective) ground for knowledge.

But in what way does the theory of *basho* supposedly provide the "logical base" for his ideas? Or put differently, how does the theory of *basho* avoid the pitfalls of the subjectivism that he associated with his earlier views? As we saw earlier, the standpoints of both pure experience and *jikaku* were problematic insofar as neither could secure the objective validity of knowledge. Accordingly, the real challenge was to provide a theory of knowledge that could account for this. Nishida soon realized that the challenge can only be sufficiently answered if one reconsiders what "knowledge" or "knowing" consists of. As he says in the "*Basho*" essay:

While epistemology, starting from the idea of the subject-object opposition, has previously conceived of knowing as the composition [*kōsei*] of matter by form, I would instead like to start from the idea of

⁴⁵ Cf. Ueda 1991, p. 302. In Japanese, we often use the word "*tenkai*" (転回) when we speak of a "turn" in philosophy. This has also been the predominant translation of the German word, "*Kehre*." Ueda seems to be engaging in a bit of wordplay by suggesting that the development of Nishida's thought from pure experience to *jikaku*, and from *jikaku* to *basho* is a turn in the sense of "*kaiten*" (回転). Both "*tenkai*" and "*kaiten*" mean "turn" and are comprised of the same two sinographs (with merely different order), but they have slightly different connotations. According to the Sanseido dictionary, "*tenkai*" means largely changing direction while "*kaiten*" means rotation as in a figure rotating around an axis. Thus, by employing "*kaiten*" instead of "*tenkai*," Ueda is emphasizing that the kind of "turn" that takes place in Nishida's thought is not so much a major change in direction as a rotation around a core idea. For a dictionary entry on "*kaiten*," see: <http://www.weblio.jp/content/%E5%9B%9E%E8%BB%A2#SSDJJ>. For an entry on "*tenkai*," see: <http://www.weblio.jp/content/%E8%BB%A2%E5%9B%9E#SSDJJ>.

self-awareness wherein the self mirrors itself within. *I think that the fundamental meaning of knowing is that the self mirrors itself within itself.*⁴⁶

Here, Nishida supposedly has in mind Kant and the neo-Kantians for whom the knower-known dichotomy, together with hylomorphic dualism, is the starting point of the epistemological problematic. Against these dualisms, Nishida wants to “start from the idea of self-awareness wherein the self mirrors itself within.” By this, he means that he wants to take this structure of *jikaku* to apply to all forms of our knowledge including our knowledge of objects. As he says, “the fundamental meaning of knowing is that the self mirrors itself within itself.” This does not mean, however, that Nishida wished to somehow reduce our knowledge of objects to self-knowledge. That was the unintended result of his position in *Intuition and Reflection*. Rather, Nishida’s claim is that all knowledge ultimately *presupposes* the self-mirroring structure of self-awareness in the sense that, in order to have knowledge of any kind, including our knowledge of objects, the content of the knowledge must be “mirrored” or “reflected” in the self. Furthermore, understanding the nature of knowledge in this way, namely via the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku*, supposedly allows Nishida to avoid subjectivism insofar as it does not presuppose subject-object dualism to begin with. In other words, the “self” that mirrors itself is not a “subject” that is opposed to some “object.” Rather, it is the *place* wherein subject-object duality lies.

Yet, to say that our knowledge in general presupposes the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku* still sounds as though Nishida was reducing knowledge to self-knowledge. This would be the case, however, only if we misunderstood the nature of the “self” or “consciousness” (Nishida uses these terms more or less interchangeably) as something that is *thing-like* with an “internal” realm. Nishida was not claiming that there is something called a “self” which mirrors or reflects things that are “external” to it. As we saw earlier, Nishida intimated that the self is necessarily disclosed to one’s place. In doing so, Nishida was rejecting any notion of the self and consciousness as thing-like, just as Heidegger had done with Dasein. Furthermore, since they are no-thing, self and consciousness are understood as “the place of nothingness” (*mu no basho*). Accordingly, the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku* does not commit Nishida to any kind of reductionist (or representationalist) account of knowledge because there “is” nothing to which knowledge can be reduced. Let us now proceed to see Nishida’s arguments for these claims.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ NKZ 4, p. 215/54.

⁴⁷ For Nishida, self-mirroring does not entail that that which mirrors has an independent existence from the mirrored. Accordingly, the self-mirroring of *jikaku* is rather different from the mirroring of a mirror or lake. For in such cases, the mirror and that which is reflected in the mirror are understood as two distinct entities. However, in the case of *jikaku*, that which reflects (*basho*) and that which is reflected are the same. As Nishida says: the “self mirrors or reflects itself within itself. The ‘mirror’ that reflects the content of the self is itself the same self. It does not reflect its shadow onto a [distinct]

Nishida's procedure for showing that knowledge ultimately presupposes the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku* is twofold. First, he proceeds to show that our knowledge of objects presupposes consciousness *qua* place (*bashotoshite no ishiki*) or what he also refers to as "the plane of consciousness" (*ishikimen*). This first part constitutes Nishida's theory of judgment. Then, it is shown that this consciousness, as the place that makes knowledge of objects possible, itself presupposes a further "place," namely "the place of absolute nothingness." This latter part can be called Nishida's theory of consciousness. In the following, we will first examine Nishida's theory of judgment (2.4) and then proceed to his theory of consciousness (2.5).

2.4. Theory of judgment

In the essay "*Basho*," Nishida proceeds to show how knowledge of objects presupposes consciousness *qua* place by considering the basic logical structure of judgment, specifically that of subsumptive judgment of the form 'S is P'. At the end of the essay, he sums up this main point:

Rather than tackling the issue of knowing [*shiru to iukoto*] by starting from the opposition of knower and known as hitherto undertaken, I wanted to start off even more deeply, from the subsumptive relationship of judgment.⁴⁸

But in what sense is starting off from the subsumptive relationship "deeper" than doing so from the subject-object dichotomy? When one begins from the distinction between the knower and the known, our understanding of consciousness is bound to the notion of the epistemic subject juxtaposed to the known object. One of Nishida's aims during this period was to show the inadequacy of this approach for understanding the nature of consciousness. For, according to Nishida, consciousness is not primarily an epistemic subject but the *place* that makes knowledge of objects, as well as experience in general, possible. And this understanding of consciousness *qua* place allegedly cannot be reached by assuming the knower-known dichotomy. To show this is the case, Nishida takes a step back and examines the basic logical

thing" (NKZ 4, 127). Cf. Fujita (2007, pp. 96-97). In fact, Nishida often uses the metaphor of the mirror in describing the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku*. Some commentators have pointed out that Nishida was led to this metaphor by Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's *chōra* as a "mirror" that reflects the shadows of the form (Cf. Ōhashi 1995, p. 74, 77; Fujita 2011, pp. 86-87). It has also been pointed out that Nishida's metaphor of the mirror deeply resonates with Zen Buddhist references to the mirror. For example, Inoue Katsuhito contends that Nishida's ideas are close to the Zen Buddhist Sheunui's (*Kataku jinne*) idea that the mirror exerts its true essence when it does not mirror anything outside itself (Cf. Inoue 1996, p. 266). On Nishida's metaphor of the mirror, see also: Kakuni (2003) and Dalissier (2006).

⁴⁸ NKZ 4, p. 289/102.

structure of judgment that does not assume the subject-object dichotomy. Accordingly, departing from the structure of subsumptive judgment, is “deeper” in the sense that it does not assume the nature of consciousness or the subject at its starting point.

In a subsumptive judgment, for example, “red is a color”, the grammatical subject (red) is a particularization of the predicate (color). Or, put differently, the predicate (universal) subsumes the subject (particular). Nishida understands judgment in terms of this subsumptive relation: “[j]udgment is the subsumption of the particular in the universal.”⁴⁹ He further highlights this relation by reformulating ‘S is P’ into ‘S is subsumed in P’ and, further, into ‘S is within P.’ As Ueda rightly notes, in formulating it this way, Nishida is able to further articulate his understanding of judgments in terms of *implacement*, i.e. the relation between “the implaced” (*oitearu mono*) and “the place of implacement” (*oitearu basho*)⁵⁰: the particular S is within the universal P which is ‘the place of implacement’ of S. In the judgment ‘S is P,’ it may appear as if two separate terms S and P are externally related by the copula ‘is’. ‘S is within P,’ however, underscores the internal connection between S and P and, more specifically, that S is the self-determination of the universal P.⁵¹

Furthermore, Nishida emphasizes that this universal must be a “concrete universal” as opposed to an “abstract universal.” Nishida is here borrowing Hegel’s distinction between the “concrete universal,” which contains within itself its particularizations and the individual, and the “abstract universal,” a universal reached by abstraction from the differences between the particulars.⁵² Nishida accordingly adopts Hegel’s understanding of judgment as *the self-differentiation of the concrete universal*.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 261/84.

⁵⁰ This distinction between “*oitearu mono*” (literally, that which is in the place) and “*oitearu basho*” (literally, the place which is placed) is the basic distinction that underlies Nishida’s theory of *basho*. I have here adopted Krummel’s neater rendering, “the implaced” and “the place of implacement” (2015, p. 24).

⁵¹ Cf. Ueda 1991, pp. 332-333.

⁵² Cf. Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia Logic* §164.

⁵³ This is not to say that Nishida uncritically adopted Hegel’s idea of the concrete universal. Krummel argues that, while Hegel understood the concrete universal as *Begriff* or *Idee*, Nishida reinterpreted it in “a more concrete direction” as the “holistic situation or context enveloping the terms in relation, serving as their primitive unity to hold their dichotomy in place and thus guaranteeing the possibility of cognition” (2015, pp. 21-23). Nishida also refers to Hegel’s understanding of judgment (*Urteil*) in reference to the etymology of *Urteil* (*Encyclopaedia Logic*, §166) as the original division of the concept (NKZ 4, p. 102). Furthermore, as some commentators have pointed out, Nishida was heavily influenced by Hegel. It began early on during the period of the *Inquiry* and extended to later periods, when Nishida explicates his thought *vis-à-vis* the dialectic (Cf. Fujita 2011, pp. 143-168; Krummel 2015). In an essay published in 1931 titled “Hegel’s Dialectic from My Standpoint,” Nishida adds a note saying that Hegel’s thought has taught him much and that his ideas are “closest to Hegel than anyone else” (NKZ 12, p. 84). As Fujita has pointed out, the way in which Nishida articulates his idea of the “self-development of pure experience” (*junsui keiken no jihatsu jiten*) in the *Inquiry* is clearly an appropriation of Hegel’s idea of “*Begriff*” whereby it completes itself through the process of self-differentiation (2011, p. 146). This point simply attests that Nishida had a great affinity for Hegel’s thought from early on.

Now, having articulated the structure of subsumptive judgments, Nishida finds a clue to clarifying the relation between knowledge (i.e. conceptual knowledge in judgments) and our experience prior to the subject-object split (i.e. prejudgmental experience) in this very structure. Namely, he articulates the two “directions” one can take in understanding the *limits* of judgment: that of particularization (i.e. grammatical subject) and that of universalization (i.e. predicate). If one takes the former, one reaches that which is the grammatical subject but never predicate. This was Aristotle’s definition of “substratum” (*hypokeimenon*): “the substratum is that of which other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else.”⁵⁴ In the *Metaphysics Book VII*, Aristotle takes this notion of substratum as the fourth sense of “*ousia*” (being or substance) after essence, universal and genus and characterizes it as the “*protē ousia*”, i.e. primary substance or being.⁵⁵ Then, in the *Categories* (chapter 5), primary substance is further characterized as the individual thing:

A substance [*ousia*] – that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all – is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse.⁵⁶

Accordingly, for Aristotle, individual things are that which transcends judgment. Nishida generally follows this conception of individual things as that which is the grammatical subject but never predicate. But insofar as such individual things are still predicated of universals, they are merely one of the individuals and not a “true individual” (*shinno kobutsu*), by which he means the one and only individual that transcends all universalization or conceptualization. Thus, Nishida goes further than Aristotle by seeking that which is subject but never predicate in an individual thing that is subject, never predicate, and that, furthermore, can no longer be predicated of. The true individual, for Nishida, is that which transcends judgment in the direction of the grammatical subject.

But one can also seek the limits of judgment in the other direction, namely that of the predicate. If one follows this direction, one reaches that which is predicate but never subject. And it is in this reversal of Aristotle’s definition of *hypokeimenon* that Nishida finds “the true transcendent” that grounds judgment, what he also calls a “deeper sense of being”:

[C]an we not think of an even deeper sense of being by reversing this [Aristotle’s definition of being] as that which is predicate but never subject? Aristotle sought the transcendent *qua* ground of judgments solely in the direction of the grammatical subject. But the true transcendent *qua* ground of

⁵⁴ *Metaphysics*, 1028b1.

⁵⁵ *Metaphysics*, 1028b1.

⁵⁶ *Categories*, 2a11.

judgments lies not in the direction of the grammatical subject but rather, in the direction of the predicate.⁵⁷

Nishida's originality appears in this reversal of Aristotle's definition of *hypokeimenon*. And, as we will see shortly, this reinterpretation is nothing other than the articulation of his idea of *basho*. Moreover, as this idea reconfigures the meaning of "being" as it has long been understood in the history of Western philosophy, it can be understood as Nishida's most important contribution to philosophy. But what exactly does "that which is predicate but never subject" refer to? If, by definition, it is not something that can be the subject of a judgment, how can we speak of it and what warrants our assuming such a thing?

Nishida names the "true individual" that transcends all predication the "transcendent subject plane" (*chōetsuteki shugomen*).⁵⁸ It is that which transcends determination by predicates. But insofar as this true individual lies at the limit of the grammatical subject of the subsumptive judgment, in principle there must be a "universal" that subsumes this true individual. Of course, this universal cannot be a predicate in any ordinary sense since the true individual transcends all predication. Rather, it must be that which subsumes the true individual without itself being subject to further predication. *It is the ultimate predicate that can be predicate but never subject*. Nishida names it the "transcendent predicate plane" (*chōetsuteki jutsugomen*).⁵⁹ But if this "transcendent predicate plane" is that which cannot itself be the subject of predication (and hence is neither determinable nor objectifiable) but is the "place" that ultimately makes possible all predication, determination and objectification, then what else could this be but a description of our *consciousness*? After all, consciousness is that which predicates and determines objects in judgments without which judgments could not be made in the first place. As Nishida writes in an essay published not long after "*Basho*":

[W]hen the predicate plane of subsumptive judgment is understood as the predicate that never becomes the subject, this is what I mean by *the plane of consciousness qua basho* [*basho toshiteno ishikimen*]. To know is to be implaced within this place. This is the final thought that I reached in the essay "*Basho*."⁶⁰

Furthermore, since it is by definition non-determinable and non-objectifiable, consciousness is "nothing." Thus, Nishida speaks of consciousness as "the place of nothingness" (*mu no basho*). Nishida accordingly contrasts this place of nothingness with the universals that serve as the "place" of particular determination, one that is nonetheless still determinable in the sense that it can still become the subject of

⁵⁷ NKZ 12, p. 13.

⁵⁸ Cf. NKZ 4, p. 352, 355.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 319, 332.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 316 (my italics).

predication, i.e. it is still determined by consciousness. He calls the latter the “place of being(s)” (*u no basho*)⁶¹. In this way, then, *via* the articulation of the structure of subsumptive judgments, and by reversing Aristotle’s definition of *hypokeimenon*, Nishida arrives at his definition of consciousness. As he says in “*Basho*”:

If we are to define consciousness from the standpoint of judgment, it would be that which thoroughly becomes the predicate but not the [grammatical] subject.⁶²

Now, what ultimately motivated Nishida to conceptualize consciousness as that which is predicate but never subject was the idea that consciousness is the ground of all objectification that is itself non-objectifiable. As such, it is in essence “nothing.” This may recall Jean-Paul Sartre’s idea of consciousness as nothingness as well as his notions of being-for-itself and the elusive nature of pre-reflective non-positional consciousness. Indeed, the connection is commonly made, and some have even gone so far as to say that Nishida’s idea of the place of nothingness is “a modern Buddhist counterpart to Sartre’s existential phenomenology” and that it can be translated “without the least departure from Nishida’s meaning” in terms of non-positional consciousness.⁶³ In response to such a claim, Brian Elwood has argued that, despite their startling resemblance, their views of the self differ radically due to their different understandings of *self-negation*.⁶⁴ We will not go into the debate here. But it is worth noting that, together with “nothingness,” the idea of self-negation is crucial for Nishida. According to Nishida, the self negates itself in the sense that it withdraws in order to make room for things to manifest themselves in consciousness. And by completely nullifying or emptying oneself, things become manifest just as they are in themselves. The place of absolute nothingness is therefore the complete self-negation of the self. We will come back to this point after looking at Nishida’s theory of consciousness below.

⁶¹ Nishida does not make an ontological distinction between being (*Sein*) and beings or entities (*Seiendes*) as Heidegger does. When Nishida speaks of “*u*” (有), this usually means “*arumono*” (有るもの, that which is), namely entities. But for Nishida, “*arumono*” does not refer just to entities but to anything that can be determined by consciousness. In this sense, both Heidegger’s beings and being would supposedly be called “*arumono*.” I have accordingly translated “*u no basho*” as “the place of being(s).”

⁶² NKZ 4, p. 278/95.

⁶³ Dilworth & Silverman 1978, p. 91.

⁶⁴ Elwood 1994, p. 305.

2.5. Theory of consciousness

After Nishida articulates the two layers of *basho*, namely the place of determined things (i.e. place of being(s)) and the place *qua* consciousness (i.e. place of nothingness), Nishida proceeds to clarify a further layer of *basho* by distinguishing two levels of consciousness *qua basho*. Namely, he distinguishes what he calls the place of oppositional or relative nothingness from that of absolute or true nothingness. It is at this point that Nishida develops his idea of consciousness from his theory of judgment.

In the “*Basho*” essay and “The Stranded Issue of Consciousness” (published one month after “*Basho*”) Nishida terms the transcendent predicate plane, “the place of oppositional nothingness” (*tairitsutekimu no basho*) or “the place of relative nothingness” (*sōtaimu no basho*). It is termed thus because this level of consciousness is opposed or relative to “being,” i.e. that which is determined in our consciousness. In the “The Stranded Issue of Consciousness,” Nishida says that this consciousness is still an *objectified* consciousness (*ishiki sareta ishiki*) and not the consciousness that is conscious (*ishiki suru ishiki*).⁶⁵ In Japanese, the same word for consciousness (*ishiki*) has a verb form (*ishiki suru*) that in English could be rendered as something like *to consciousnessize*. Accordingly, we can say, somewhat clumsily, that Nishida distinguishes the *consciousized* consciousness from *consciousizing* consciousness and claims that the latter remains to be clarified. But what exactly is the nature of this consciousnessing consciousness and, how does it differ from the consciousnessed consciousness? Put differently, what is the difference between the place of absolute or true nothingness and that of relative or oppositional nothingness?

In clarifying this distinction, Nishida makes specific reference to Emil Lask’s ideas. This reference to Lask deserves some attention. For, of all the neo-Kantians who influenced Nishida, it was Lask that was most influential during the development of his theory of *basho*. Interestingly, this corresponds to the period *after* Nishida’s most extensive engagement with other neo-Kantians, specifically Windelband, Rickert and Cohen. In fact, Nishida’s references to Lask are almost exclusively found in the two essays “*Basho*” and “The Stranded Issue of Consciousness.”⁶⁶ Yet despite this limited context, they nonetheless prove helpful in clarifying the theory of *basho* in its early development and specifically the difference between the two levels of consciousness.

In his book *Nishida’s Philosophy* published in 1935, Kōyama Iwao, a student of Nishida’s, famously remarked that Lask’s idea of “domain category” (*Gebietskategorie*) triggered the establishment of

⁶⁵ NKZ 12, pp. 13-15.

⁶⁶ Nishida’s reference to Lask is first made in the essay, “*Basho*.” Aside from the numerous references to Lask in “*Basho*” and “The Stranded Issue of Consciousness,” Nishida makes only sporadic references in *The Self-aware System of Universals* (1930) and *The Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* (1933).

Nishida's idea of *basho*.⁶⁷ More recently, Itabashi Yūjin has developed this claim in his detailed analysis of the Nishida-Lask relation.⁶⁸ I have elsewhere argued that Nishida was most influenced by what I called Lask's "logical objectivism" or, more specifically, the idea that "transcendent objects" are characterized as "transoppositional."⁶⁹ Lask located Kant's Copernican Revolution in extending the province of the logical to objects or, put differently, introducing the concept of being into transcendental logic.⁷⁰ Due to this discovery, objects were no longer considered *metalogical* but, rather, understood as having the logical as a constituting moment. But in Lask's view, Kant and the epistemological logic that developed afterwards neglected the supposedly evident fact that in judgments, one can only judge the "after-image" (*Nachbild*) of objects and not the objects themselves. According to Lask, the primary object of judgment is that which has either true or false value. But the true standard of judgment, he argues, must itself lie beyond this opposition between truth and falsity.⁷¹ Accordingly, he maintains that the true standard of judgment is the transcendent object that lies beyond judgments (*urteilsjenseitig*) and is characterized by "transoppositonality" (*Übergegensätzlichkeit*) since it is beyond the true/false opposition.⁷²

In the essay "*Basho*," Nishida states his agreement with Lask that the only non-dogmatic way to make sense of objects that lie beyond judgment is to think of them as transoppositional, or, in Nishida's words, "oppositionless." Thus, Nishida speaks of transcendent objects (i.e. "objects themselves") as "oppositionless objects" (*tairitsunaki taishō*). Upon noting his agreement, he goes on to say:

When seeing such an object [oppositionless object] we may think that we are transcending the field of subjective consciousness that establishes the oppositional contents. But this means nothing other than that we are advancing from *the standpoint of oppositional nothingness* to the *standpoint of true nothingness*. [...] This does not mean that we are discarding the so-called standpoint of consciousness; rather we are radicalizing this standpoint.⁷³

This corresponds to the following passage from "The Stranded Issue of Consciousness":

Lask's oppositionless object must lie completely outside of consciousness. *But how can such transcendent object relate to our consciousness as the object of knowledge?* By understanding

⁶⁷ Kōyama 1935, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Itabashi 2004, pp. 131-146. Aside from Kōyama and Itabashi, Niels Guelberg (1997) and John Krummel (2015, p. 21, 67) have also provided an analysis of the Nishida-Lask relation.

⁶⁹ Ishihara 2014.

⁷⁰ Cf. Lask 1923b, p. 28; 1923a, p. 286.

⁷¹ The exposition of Lask's view that I have given here is only a very rough outline. For a detailed account of Lask's position, see: Crowell (2001, chapter 2). On Lask's theory of judgment, see: Emundts (2008).

⁷² Cf. Lask, *Die Lehre vom Urteil*, chapter 2.

⁷³ NKZ 4, pp. 221/57-58.

consciousness as *the place of nothingness* and when this place becomes *absolute nothingness*, that which is implaced becomes the oppositional object.⁷⁴

In these passages, Nishida is agreeing with Lask that the objects themselves are not reducible to the object of our judgment. Accordingly, both Nishida and Lask criticize Rickert for conceiving the object exclusively in relation to the judging subject. Furthermore, they are also in agreement that we have an immediate experience of objects themselves prior to our grasp of them in judgment.⁷⁵ Here, we can witness Lask trying to move beyond the subject-object dualism inherent in Kantian epistemology. Indeed, this was one of the important ideas that influenced not only Nishida but, interestingly, also early Heidegger.⁷⁶ As the above passages indicate, however, Nishida was also not completely satisfied with Lask's position. Although Lask was trying to overcome the epistemological dualism by conceiving transcendent objects as lying in a realm beyond judgment, Lask struggled to develop the subjective aspects of his logical objectivism. Therefore, he conceived of transcendent objects as intuitable in our immediate experience without accordingly developing a notion of subjectivity or consciousness that simply lives in this experience without distorting the object as the judging subject does.⁷⁷

As we can see from the above passages, Nishida seeks to complement this idea of the transoppositional object by reconceiving consciousness as the place of nothingness. He thus says that transcendent objects lie beyond not consciousness *per se* but only the place of oppositional nothingness. As he also says in a different passage:

[T]he consciousness of the oppositionless object does not entail consciousness transcending itself, but rather that consciousness enters deeply into itself. We say that this is to transcend [consciousness itself] because we are looking only at the relations between objects without thinking of the essence of consciousness itself.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ NKZ 12, p. 15 (my italics).

⁷⁵ Cf. NKZ 4, pp. 212-213/52

⁷⁶ Krummel has also aptly pointed this out: "[w]hat profoundly affected both Heidegger and Nishida was this Laskian notion of a primal non-duality of being and sense (*Sinn*) in an 'immediate intuitable lived experience' (*unmittelbare anschauliche Erleben*)" (2015, p. 21). For Lask's influence on early Heidegger, see: Kisiel (1995) and Crowell (2001, chapter 2, 4).

⁷⁷ In fact, Lask does speak of the subjective correlate of objects that transcend judgments as "*Empfängerin*" (1923a, p. 396), "*Erlebensstätte*" (1923b, p. 191) or "*Realisierungsstätte*" (1923a, 448). He also mentions that our knowledge of transcendent objects is a kind of "dedication" (*Hingabe*) (1923a, p. 396). Kisiel has pointed out that this idea of giving ourselves over to the objects of immediate experience also had an influence on early Heidegger (1995, pp. 214-215). Lask, however, does not develop these ideas in further detail. Therefore, in positing objects themselves beyond the realm of the judging subject without providing an account of how these objects can be given to the subject, Lask's position begins to look like a dogmatic metaphysical position. For a great discussion of this point, see: Crowell 2001, chapter 2.

⁷⁸ NKZ 4, p. 284/99.

In Nishida's framework, the object of judgment characterized by oppositionality is implaced in *the place of oppositional nothingness*. Now, when we speak of "transcendent objects" as transcending the realm of judgment, we somehow think that these objects are beyond consciousness *per se*. But according to Nishida, this is a misunderstanding that arises from not properly understanding the nature of consciousness. If we attend to the nature of consciousness as the "place" wherein objects manifest, then we can understand how "transcendent objects" are not beyond consciousness but, rather, experienced at a deeper level of consciousness whereby there is no more opposition between knower and known. Thus, transcendent objects are not beyond consciousness but, rather, implaced in *the place of absolute nothingness* (or what he here also calls, true nothingness). Here, transcendent objects are not experienced as *objects* of our awareness since all object-awareness disappears at this level. In the place of absolute nothingness, things just appear as they are in themselves without seer or seen. Nishida accordingly reinterprets Lask's idea of transcendent objects characterized in terms of transoppositionality as implaced in the place of absolute nothingness.⁷⁹

Accordingly, *the place of absolute nothingness* (*zettai mu no basho*) can be distinguished from *the place of oppositional or relative nothingness* (*tairitsuteki mu no basho*, *sōtairi mu no basho*) in terms of that which is implaced (*oitearu mono*). Namely, in the place of relative nothingness, one "finds" the object of judgment. This is to say that objects are experienced *as objects of our judgment*. Accordingly, insofar as these objects are necessarily correlated with the judging subject, consciousness is understood as *relative nothingness*. In the place of absolute nothingness, however, one "finds" transcendent objects in the sense that we do not experience these "objects" as objects of our awareness but, rather, *we live through them*. In enjoying a piece of music simply unfold, we are not making it an object but are living through it. In being lost in an exciting novel, the novel is no "object" but is what I am living through.

We can also rephrase this in terms of the self-negating character of consciousness we mentioned earlier. In judging about objects, consciousness negates itself, or withdraws, in order to make room for objects to manifest to the judging subject. In entertaining the thought that the music is loud, the object of my awareness, "loud music," manifests itself in my consciousness. Accordingly, consciousness has made room for this "loud music" to manifest itself. But in such experience, consciousness is still *relative nothingness*; it has not fully negated itself. However, when I simply live through the music such that the "music" is not so much manifesting to anyone as merely *realizing* itself, consciousness has negated itself completely. In the moment of my absorption in the flow of the music, "I" am not there anymore. Consciousness has completely nullified or emptied itself, and the "music" has instead filled the place of

⁷⁹ Cf. Ishihara 2014, pp. 79-82.

absolute nothingness, so to say.⁸⁰ As Ueda says, in such experience, “‘I’ am infinitely open as the “self-less” and fulfilled.”⁸¹

Let me here further explain the difference between “music manifesting to consciousness” and “‘music’ realizing itself.” At first sight, there seems to be no significant difference. Although the word “realize” may seem to have less of the connotation that the subject matter is appearing to someone, this is not so clear since we can still say, “the music realizes itself in consciousness (or in us).” Thus, the difference between “manifest” and “realize” is not so much that the latter is stripped of the connotation that the music is appearing to consciousness. Rather, I have in mind the twofold meaning of the word “realize,” namely “actualize” and “understand” that Nishitani Keiji, a student of Nishida’s, appeals to in his choice of this word to express what he calls “the self-realization of reality.”⁸² When we say that the “music” realizes itself in “us,” this entails, on the one hand, that the “music” *actualizes* itself in “us.” On the other hand, it entails *our coming to an understanding*, or what Nishida calls “appropriating through understanding,” that the “music” is indeed actualizing itself in “us.” Accordingly, when the “music” realizes itself in “us,” it is not the case that it merely manifests itself to us. Rather, it is coupled with the alteration of our understanding of ourselves and the reality. To employ the language of Nishida and others⁸³, when the “music” realizes itself in “us,” I have understood that “I am the music, and the music is me.” Thus, in absolute nothingness, it is not as if consciousness somehow completely disappears. It is only that consciousness is no longer understood within the subject-object framework; it is not a subject to which the object appears. It has completely nullified itself. And in this complete nullification, “I” have understood

⁸⁰ Since it is somewhat inevitable that we employ the language of the subject-object framework in describing experience that is beyond it, I put quotation marks around the subject (I, we, me, us) and object (music, reality, etc.) when I am speaking about experience at the level of absolute nothingness.

⁸¹ Ueda makes this claim in his description of what he calls “original experience” (*genkeiken*, 原経験). Referring to Nishida’s quotation from the *Inquiry* on pure experience, he says: “[i]n the very moment of seeing a color, hearing a sound, there is not yet subject nor object.” In such experience, ‘I’ am infinitely open as the ‘self-less’ and fulfilled.” And shortly after, he also says it is the “direct fulfillment of experience” (2000, p. 168).

⁸² Nishitani 1982, p. 5. Compare what he says: “I am using the word [‘realize’] to indicate that our ability to perceive reality means that reality realizes (actualizes) itself in us; that this in turn is the only way that we can realize (appropriate through understanding) the fact that reality is so realizing itself in us; and that in so doing the self-realization of reality itself takes place” (1982, p. 5).

⁸³ In his “Fragmentary Notes on Pure Experience” (*Junsuikeiken ni kansuru danshō*), Nishida gives the following simple, yet powerful, description of pure experience: “I am looking at the flower. At this moment, the flower is me and I am the flower” (NKZ 16, p. 430). See also: Ueda (1991), Maraldo (2012). In Maraldo’s paper, he cites the Japanese calligrapher Morita Shirū’s (1912-1998) description of his own experience of practicing calligraphy: “[o]nly in the moment I and the brush truly become one, does it really happen that ‘I do calligraphy’ [...] I and the brush are one. I am the brush, the brush is me” (Morita 1971, pp. 124-125; cited in Maraldo 2012, p. 69 [Maraldo’s translation]).

and appropriated the fact that “reality” is realizing itself in “me” and that “I” am absolutely no-thing but this realizing “reality.”

2.6. Three levels of *basho*

We have now outlined Nishida’s theory of *basho* as it was first developed in *From the Acting to the Seeing*. It should now be clear that Nishida’s theory of *basho* is a complex theory that combines the theory of judgment and the theory of consciousness. It is basically an attempt to show that things or objects in a broad sense (i.e. anything determinable by consciousness) presuppose consciousness as the ground of determination and objectification and, furthermore, that this ground of determination, i.e. “consciousness,” has two levels: the place of relative nothingness and the place of absolute nothingness. At this point, then, we can lay out the three levels of *basho* Nishida articulates in this period: the place of being(s) (*u no basho*), the place of relative nothingness (*sōtaimu no basho*) and the place of absolute nothingness (*zettai mu no basho*). Nishida’s theory of *basho*, then, involves what Krummel calls a “series of implacements within implacements”⁸⁴ that moves from the more abstract level to the more concrete level that serves as the ground of its possibility. In light of Nishida’s basic distinction between the implied (*oitearu mono*) and the place of implication (*oitearu basho*), we can say that the theory of *basho* casts light on the structure of the deepening of the place of implication *and* the meaning of being as being implied.

3. Theory of *basho* in *The Self-aware System of Universals* (1930)

After laying bare the basic structure of the theory of *basho* in the latter half of *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927), Nishida goes on to develop this theory in more detail in his subsequent works. In this section, we will be looking at his subsequent book, *The Self-aware System of Universals* published in 1930. We will be focusing mainly on the book’s fourth essay, “The Intelligible World,” first published in 1928. This essay is particularly important in that it summarizes his main points of this period, as he himself says in the preface, and introduces the Husserlian noesis-noema distinction for the first time. This latter point will be especially relevant for us in the next chapter. Yet it should be noted that I will not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of the theory of *basho* as it was developed in this period, for the whole

⁸⁴ Krummel 2015, p.24.

picture Nishida draws of it in these essays is quite intricate and complicated and far exceeds the scope of this chapter. Therefore, I will only focus on the points relevant to the current discussion.

3.1. Three levels of universals

Upon introducing his theory of *basho* in the latter half of *From the Acting to the Seeing*, Nishida comes to formulate the three levels of *basho* into three levels of universals.⁸⁵ In the “Intelligible World,” Nishida begins by identifying these three levels: “the judging universal” (*handanteki ippansha*), “the self-aware universal” (*jikakuteki ippansha*) and “the intelligible universal” (*eichiteki ippansha*)⁸⁶. In accordance with these three universals, he distinguishes three worlds that are respectively implaced and determined by the universal: the world of nature (*shizenkai*), the world of consciousness (*ishikikai*) and the world of intelligibility (*eichitekisekai*). Now, in the previous section, we posed the question regarding the nature of the place of absolute nothingness. In *From the Acting to the Seeing*, we saw that Nishida articulated its difference from the place of relative nothingness *vis-à-vis* the object that is implaced. Here, Nishida poses a similar question but in terms of “the intelligible world”:

The intelligible world is that which transcends our thinking. In what way are we able to think of such a world? If thinking involves the self-determination of a universal, what kind of self-determination of the universal allows us to think of the intelligible world?⁸⁷

By claiming that the intelligible world is that which “transcends” our thinking, Nishida is saying that such a world cannot be understood as the *object* of our thought. But in fact, since he understands this intelligible world to also “transcend” our volition, in the sense that it cannot be the object of our will, his question should be: *in what way do we come to “know” the world if it can be the object of neither our thought nor our will?* Indeed, the majority of the essay is devoted to answering this question. But Nishida proceeds here in a much more systematic fashion than before. What is especially interesting is that he incorporates Husserl’s noesis-noema distinction into this discussion in order to elucidate the structure of

⁸⁵ To be precise, the three *basho* do not correspond exactly to the three levels of universals. While the first two *basho* (the place of being(s) and the place of relative nothingness) roughly correspond to the first two levels of universals (the judging universal and the self-aware universal), the place of absolute nothingness does not correspond to the intelligible universal. Nishida in fact sees an even deeper universal that envelops the intelligible universal and calls this “the universal of absolute nothingness” (NKZ 5, p. 179).

⁸⁶ In the essay “Intelligible World,” Nishida calls this universal, the “universal of intellectual intuition” (*chitekichokkan no ippansha*). But later, he comes to prefer the term “intelligible universal.” Cf. NKZ 5, p. 140.

⁸⁷ NKZ 5, pp. 123-124.

the self-aware universal and the way in which we come to think of the intelligible universal. Nishida's strategy is quite simple. He attempts to show that there is a structural parallel between all three levels of universals. He first proceeds to show that the structure of the self-aware universal parallels that of the judging universal. Then, he goes on to show that the structure of the intelligible universal parallels that of the self-aware universal. This allows him to then draw an analogy between the way in which we come to understand the self-aware universal and the way in which we come to understand the intelligible universal.

3.2. From the judging universal to the self-aware universal

The judging universal corresponds to what Nishida called "the place of being(s)" in *From the Acting to the Seeing*. That which was implaced in the place of being(s) was said to be that which can be determined in our consciousness in the form of judgments. Accordingly, Nishida comes to call the place of being(s) the judging universal or the universal of judgments. To recall, Nishida sought the ground of judgment in the direction of the grammatical subject and the predicate and finally came to his definition of consciousness as the transcendent predicate plane. Moreover, insofar as this place cannot be determined as the grammatical subject, Nishida called consciousness "the place of nothingness." Accordingly, the place of nothingness was understood as enveloping the place of being(s). Following the same line of reasoning, Nishida comes to call this place of implacement of the judging universal "the self-aware universal." It is called this because we become aware of ourselves here, i.e. consciousness becomes the object of our awareness.⁸⁸

At this point, Nishida distinguishes two meanings of "being," which is implaced in the self-aware universal. These correspond to the two ways in which one can become aware of oneself. Nishida calls the first "intellectual self" (*chiteki jiko*) which he says is a "formal" self. It is formal because the "content" or correlate of the intellectual self is merely the content of judgment:

The intellectual self is that which is self-aware and has as its content of consciousness directly the content of the judging universal as it is in itself. The intellectual self, as implaced in the self-aware universal, is merely a formal being that does not yet have its own self-aware content.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

In other words, since the intellectual self is merely the formal correlate of the content of judgment, it is said to lack its own content, by which he means one's "self-aware content." In order to "have its own self-content," Nishida contends that we must delve deeper into the meaning of the being of that which is implicated in the self-aware universal. Subsequently, at this depth, we find the "volitional self" (*ishiteki jiko*). At this point, consciousness is now understood not merely as the transcendent predicate plane of *judgment* but, rather, as the "self-aware conscious plane that reflects or mirrors its own content."⁹⁰ But here we must pause and ask: in what sense could it be said that the volitional self "reflects or mirrors its own content" while the intellectual self does not?

It is useful here to refer back to, as Nishida himself does, the distinction between the concrete universal and the abstract universal in judgment. The two are distinguished in that, while the abstract universal is reached by abstracting from the differences and hence does not contain its particulars, the concrete universal contains within itself its particularizations. Accordingly, judgment was understood as the self-determination of the concrete universal. Now, the volitional self is similar to the concrete universal in that it *self-determines itself*. Put differently, it includes within itself its own determination. To give an example, when I will to read Plato's *Republic*, I am expressing my inner drive to fulfill my intellectual curiosity. In expressing this will, I am therefore *determining myself* and, accordingly, the content of the will is *my own*. This is not the case, however, in intellectually or theoretically relating to things. For the intellectual self merely relates to the content of judgments in an external way. For example, when I judge that the *Republic* is one of Plato's longest works, the content of the judgment is in no way conceivable as the self-determination of myself. Therefore, insofar as we become aware of our own self-aware content only in the volitional self, Nishida claims that "[t]rue self-awareness is not mere intellectual self-awareness but rather, volitional self-awareness."⁹¹

Now, for any kind of self-determination of the universal, Nishida says that there must be a "determining act" (*gentei sayō*) that is responsible for this determination.⁹² In the judging universal, the determining act is said to be the *judgment* insofar as the grammatical subject and the predicate are related in judgment. But what then is the determining act of the self-aware universal? According to Nishida, the self-aware universal determines itself through the noesis-noema correlation.⁹³ This is just to say that, when we become aware of ourselves, we are, on the one hand, aware of objects or things as determined in the judging universal and, on the other hand, aware of ourselves. Taking up Husserl's terminology, Nishida

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 128.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 140, 152-153.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 124.

refers to the former as the “noema” and the latter “noesis.” Yet, Nishida does not identify *intentionality* as the determining act of the self-aware universal. Rather, he identifies it with *jikaku*.⁹⁴ In order to see Nishida’s reason for this, it may be helpful to refer to the level of the judging universal again. As we saw in the previous section, Nishida understood the relation between the grammatical subject and the predicate specifically as the self-determination of the concrete universal. As we have already intimated, here Nishida similarly wants to understand the self-aware universal as that which determines itself within itself. But intentionality, according to Nishida, cannot do this job. It highlights the structure of consciousness as referring beyond itself to objects but it is not *self*-determining. Only when we understand consciousness as reflecting or mirroring itself within itself, namely as *self-mirroring*, does this self-determining aspect of consciousness become apparent, or so Nishida contends. In this way, Nishida understands *jikaku qua* self-mirroring as the determining act of the self-aware universal. Accordingly, both the intellectual self and the volitional self are self-aware (*jikakuteki*) insofar as they are determined in the self-aware universal.

3.3. From the self-aware universal to the intelligible universal

After introducing the noesis-noema correlation at the level of the self-aware universal as the equivalent of the relation between the grammatical subject and the predicate at the level of the judging universal, Nishida proceeds to articulate the third level of the universal, namely the intelligible universal. At this point, the initial question is posed again but in a slightly different way: “[w]hat does it mean for consciousness to transcend consciousness?”⁹⁵ As the question is not at all clearly put, we can rephrase it thus: *how does self-awareness (jikaku) extend to the level of the intellectual universal?*

Nishida’s strategy is to draw a parallel with the transition from the judging universal to the self-aware universal. As we saw in the previous section, that which transcends judgment was sought in the direction of the grammatical subject and the direction of the predicate. In the latter direction, Nishida found consciousness to be the transcendent predicate plane. Similarly, Nishida seeks that which transcends consciousness in the two directions, namely noema and noesis. And in this transcendence in the direction of noesis, or what Nishida calls “noetic transcendence” (*noesisteki chōetsu*), one enters the “intelligible world,” or what he also refers to as the “transcendent world.” That which is implaced is accordingly called the “transcendent self.” In this way, by analogy, Nishida comes to conceptualize the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 140.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 132.

universal that further envelops the self-aware universal. But what exactly is the nature of this “intelligible world” or what he also referred to as the “world of intellectual intuition”?

Nishida clearly had in mind these terms as used by Plato and the Neoplatonists (specifically, Plotinus). But Nishida reconceived these ideas in terms of his notion of *noetic transcendence*. Both Plato and Plotinus understood the intelligible world as that which transcends this world. But according to Nishida, this is because they understood transcendence in the direction of the noema. For Nishida, the intelligible world does not transcend this world noematically but, rather, noetically. In other words, the intelligible world is not beyond this world in some transcendent realm but, rather, it is found in the *depths of our awareness*. Nishida’s understanding of intellectual intuition is accordingly also at odds with its traditional meaning. According to Nishida, subject and object come into unity in intellectual intuition. But this is not to say that we first posit the subject and object and, subsequently, a unity between the two is reached. Nishida contends that this is the traditional understanding of intellectual intuition. Rather, for Nishida, intellectual intuition means that “the self sees itself directly,” and solely that.⁹⁶ By the phrase “seeing oneself directly,” Nishida is implying the level of our awareness that has annihilated object-awareness. Accordingly, to see oneself directly is to see oneself *non-objectively*. Thus, while consciousness determined by the self-aware universal was characterized by the noesis-noema correlation, at the level of the intelligible universal, any sort of subject-object dichotomy is superseded. As he says:

In the universal of intellectual intuition, such opposition of consciousness [the noesis-noema opposition] must disappear. The noema must withdraw [*bossuru*] into the noesis. The objective world must be totally subjectified.⁹⁷

Based on this view, Nishida accordingly reinterprets Plato’s ideas and those highest values, specifically truth, beauty and goodness, by distinguishing three levels of the intelligible self (or the transcendent self), namely, that which sees the idea of truth (the intellectual intelligible self), the idea of beauty (the emotive intelligible self) and the idea of goodness (the volitional intelligible self).⁹⁸ And just as the intellectual self in the self-aware universal was said to be “merely formal” in that it does not mirror its own content, Nishida maintains that the intellectual intelligible self is also merely formal for the same reason.⁹⁹ When one sees the idea of beauty, however, one comes into unity with the beautiful such that this reflects or is expressive of one’s own emotion. In this sense, then, the emotive intelligible self is said to

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 140, 159.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 160.

have its own content. Yet in Nishida's view, seeing the goodness goes even deeper insofar as, at this level, one becomes moral and "sees" oneself purely by practically acting in conscience.¹⁰⁰

At this point, it is also worth mentioning that, with his idea of place, Nishida explicitly had in mind Plato's idea of *chōra* (χώρα) in the *Timaeus* as the place of ideas. As he says in the essay "*Basho*":

Following the words of Plato's *Timaeus*, I shall call the receptacle of the ideas [...] *basho*. Needless to say, I am not suggesting that what I call *basho* is the same as Plato's "space" or "receptacle place."¹⁰¹

For Plato, *chōra* is the receptacle of ideas that defies determination. In this sense, it is similar to Nishida's *basho*. But it is also dissimilar in the sense that, as Krummel writes, "*basho* is not a mere receptacle for the ideas' formations but rather a self-forming formlessness."¹⁰² Granting this difference, the comparison is nonetheless fruitful in that it helps us understand the nature of "*basho*." In fact, Krummel goes so far as to interpret Nishida's later dialectical logic of place as a kind of "chorology."¹⁰³ Although it is not my intention to follow Krummel's interpretation here, I agree with his suggestion that one should acknowledge the "chōratic nature" of Nishida's notion of place inasmuch as Nishida was inspired by Plato's ideas.¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, as I have already done in my description of the place of nothingness in the previous section, I would like to adopt Krummel's language of speaking of *basho* as the undeterminable field that "makes room" or "clears room" for its determinations. As Krummel says:

Like *chōra*, Nishida's *basho* at its most concrete level eludes positive description, yet in its nothingness it opens a space for things determined and differentiated from one another and envelops them. It recedes into the dark to make room for the objects of our attention.¹⁰⁵

Lastly, I will briefly mention that Nishida did not stop at this level of the intelligible world. As he says, "I do not think that the universal of intellectual intuition is the last level."¹⁰⁶ Nishida believed that beyond one's conscience lies the path to religious enlightenment. Or he also explains that, in seeing the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 161-162. He also notes that the idea of goodness cannot be seen objectively but is only practically experienced in acting out our will (NKZ 5, p. 168).

¹⁰¹ NKZ 4, p. 209/50.

¹⁰² Krummel 2015, p. 75.

¹⁰³ More precisely, he interprets Nishida's dialectical logic of place as a "chiasmatic chorology." Cf. Krummel (2015, especially chapter 10).

¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, I also agree with Krummel that the meaning of Nishida's "*basho*" is closer to Plato's "*chōra*" than to "*topos*" (2015, p. 203; Cf. p. 262, note 38). This point is especially important since some English translators have rendered "*basho*" by "*topos*," which is somewhat misleading, given the specific meaning of "*basho*" (cf. my Introduction, note 10). For discussions on the *chōra*-*topos* distinction, see also: Casey (1997), Sallis (1999), Berque (2002).

¹⁰⁵ Krummel 2015, p. 203.

¹⁰⁶ NKZ 5, p. 172.

ideas of truth, beauty and goodness, “there is still the knower that knows itself as the seer of ideas.”¹⁰⁷ In absolute nothingness, however, everything that is seen including those ideas and highest values dissipates in the face of religious values.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, Nishida saw “the universal of absolute nothingness” at the very basis of his system of universals that envelops the intelligible universal. He explains this level in the following way:

That which envelops even the universal of intellectual intuition and that wherein our true self is implaced, is what should be called the place of absolute nothingness, namely the religious consciousness. [...] When one goes beyond this [the universal of intellectual intuition], one cannot say anything about that which is implaced in the place of absolute nothingness. It is totally beyond the standpoint of conceptual knowledge. It is the world of spiritual intuition that is beyond language and thought.¹⁰⁹

Ultimately, then, in Nishida’s view, all our conceptual knowledge must be based on this universal of absolute nothingness that transcends any conceptualization, or what Nishida calls “absolute noetic transcendence” (*zettai no noesisteki chōetsu*).¹¹⁰ Insofar as Nishida explicitly characterizes this level in terms of religious experience, we can now see how commentators have wanted to put emphasis on the religious dimension of his theory of *basho*. Indeed, Nishida’s colleague Tanabe Hajime famously criticized Nishida for basing his philosophy on religious experience and thereby ending up in a kind of Plotinian emanationism.¹¹¹ While Tanabe’s criticism is rather harsh, it does prompt Nishida to put more emphasis on the dialectical nature of the self-determination of absolute nothingness and to reconceive his logic of *basho* as a dialectical logic. As it exceeds the scope of this work, however, I will not examine his criticism in any detail. We will nonetheless touch on this point in the following chapter in the context of articulating Nishida’s distinction between the religious and philosophical standpoint.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let us sum up Nishida’s theory of *basho* by asking the following question: *how did Nishida’s theory of basho respond to the challenge after the Inquiry to provide a theory of*

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. NKZ 5, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 180.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 180.

¹¹¹ Tanabe published his first critical essay towards Nishida in 1930 under the title, “Requesting Professor Nishida’s teachings.” Cf. Tanabe (1963).

knowledge that adequately accounts for the objective validity of knowledge? To begin with, by attending to the place of *jikaku*, Nishida came to understand “knowledge” or “knowing” in terms of the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku*, namely as “the self mirroring or reflecting itself within itself.” In Nishida’s view, this way of understanding our knowledge avoids the pitfalls of subjectivism (inherent in his previous ideas of pure experience and *jikaku*) and Kantian epistemological dualism insofar as it does not assume a problematic understanding of the nature of consciousness. The “self” in the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku* is not a subject standing over against an object; it is not some “internal” realm that is juxtaposed to the “external” world. Rather, the self is necessarily disclosed to one’s place. Put in terms of consciousness, consciousness is not thing-like but it is the “place of nothingness.” Accordingly, Nishida sought to demonstrate that all our knowledge, including that of objects, presupposes the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku*. Nishida’s argument was twofold. *Firstly*, knowledge of objects presupposes consciousness *qua* place of nothingness insofar as whatever is determinable in judgments presupposes the ground of determination, predication and objectification, i.e. consciousness. *Secondly*, such consciousness *qua* ground of judgment itself presupposes a further “place.” In *From the Acting to the Seeing*, this further place was identified as “the place of absolute nothingness” while, in *The Self-aware System of Universals*, Nishida identified “the intelligible universal” before “the absolute nothingness.” These differences aside, what led to the further deepening of *jikaku* and, accordingly, consciousness was Nishida’s conviction that our experience of “transcendent objects,” i.e. things in themselves, cannot be reduced to our grasp of them in the place of relative nothingness. In other words, the ultimate ground of judgment cannot be understood as the relative nothingness that is opposed to objects, i.e. the subject that grasps the object. Rather, the very ground of judgment must be understood as the absolute nothingness whereby “objects” or “things” realizes themselves in “us.” In the end, then, Nishida’s theory of *basho* has the following basic structure: The place of being(s) is implaced in the place of relative nothingness (self-aware consciousness), which is subsequently implaced in the place of absolute nothingness (or the intelligible world, which is then implaced in absolute nothingness). Therefore, Nishida sought to secure the objective validity of knowledge by showing that our knowledge of objects ultimately presupposes the place of absolute nothingness, i.e. by grounding our knowledge of objects in our experience of transcendent objects, that is, our experience of “reality” realizing itself in “us.”

Chapter 6: Nishida's critical engagement with the transcendental in his early theory of *basho*

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold. The first aim is to clarify Nishida's engagement with transcendental philosophy in his early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s. Specifically, I will articulate the extent to which the theory of *basho* operates within a traditional transcendental framework and the extent to which it attempts to go beyond it. I will do so by examining how Nishida's theory of *basho* fits (or does not fit) with the three criteria of transcendental philosophy established in Chapter 2. The second aim is to shed light on the similarities and dissimilarities between Nishida's and Heidegger's engagement with transcendental philosophy. Therefore, although the general structure of this chapter will run parallel to that of Chapter 4, this chapter will be different in that I will be contrasting Nishida's position with Heidegger's which we saw in Chapter 4. As such, this chapter will reflect our findings in Chapter 4.

In important respects, Nishida's relationship to transcendental philosophy parallels that of Heidegger's. To begin with, both were more expressive of their critical rather than approving stance towards the tradition. Nonetheless, they were following the tradition in many ways. Moreover, since we are (rather incidentally) dealing with their philosophy in the same period of the late 1920s, they also share the historical background to which they were responding. At that time, the neo-Kantian movement had already lost its potency with the rise of phenomenology. Thus by the late 1920s, they were reacting more to Husserl's phenomenology than to neo-Kantianism. But as Kant was revived by Husserl's turn to transcendental phenomenology, he gained more relevance for Heidegger and Nishida than before. Both Heidegger's project in BT and Nishida's early theory of *basho* accordingly developed through critical engagement with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Kant's transcendental philosophy.

Unlike Heidegger, however, Nishida was largely indebted to the ideas of the German idealist thinkers after Kant, most conspicuously Hegel and Fichte.¹ But since Fichte's influence on Nishida was mainly during the period of *jikaku*, this has less relevance for my purposes in this chapter. And although Hegel's influence on Nishida extended from early to later periods, we will not be focusing on Hegel's influence on Nishida either. For, as some commentators have argued, although Nishida was influenced by Hegel from early on, it is not until the later period, when he develops his ideas in the form of a dialectic,

¹ Interestingly, Thomas Wentzer (2003) has argued that Heidegger's hermeneutic of facticity is in a certain way a continuation of Hegelianism.

that he becomes more expressive about his critical stance towards Hegel.² During the initial period of the development of the theory of *basho*, Nishida was more explicitly formulating his thought against Kant and Husserl. Accordingly, while we certainly do not deny the presence of the Hegelian influence in his early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s, insofar as it is only implicit, we will rather focus on Nishida's critical stance towards Kant and Husserl.

Now, despite this apparent parallel between Heidegger and Nishida in their engagement with transcendental thought in the late 1920s, there is rather large discrepancy in the scholarships regarding this issue. As we have seen in Chapter 4, within Heidegger scholarship, it has become less controversial and more commonplace to acknowledge Heidegger's engagement with transcendental philosophy especially during the time of BT. This is not paralleled in Nishida scholarship. Commentators have certainly acknowledged Nishida's indebtedness to Kant, German idealism, neo-Kantianism and Husserl's phenomenology. Furthermore, considerable efforts have been made to unravel their influence on Nishida's thought. Despite all this, however, very few attempts have been made to systematically articulate Nishida's relationship to transcendental thought until today.³ What is to account for this neglect?

I believe that we can identify at least two possible reasons for this lacuna in Nishida scholarship. Firstly, Nishida's philosophy has often been misunderstood or misrepresented by scholars who specialize in Western philosophy. To take one example, a prominent Kantian scholar in Japan, Iwaki Kenichi, has criticized Nishida's philosophy on the grounds that Nishida distorts Kantian philosophy from his Buddhist or Eastern perspective in a way that undermines the critical nature of Kant's philosophy. According to Iwaki, to take the standpoint of *basho* is to go beyond the subject-object dichotomy inherent in the experienced world (which is supposedly the standpoint of the small self in Buddhism) towards the standpoint of the great self, which is beyond all linguistic articulation. Moreover, such a standpoint entails a philosophy that ultimately affirms everything ("philosophy of absolute affirmation," *zettai kōtei no tetsugaku*)⁴. Iwaki thus argues that Nishida renders Kant's critical philosophy uncritical by reinterpreting Kant's transcendental apperception as the place of absolute nothingness. Accordingly, Nishida's "Buddhist (or Eastern) understanding of Kant's philosophy" is a distortion of Kantian philosophy.⁵ Furthermore, Iwaki argues that because it is uncritical, Nishida's philosophy is itself problematic.

² Cf. Fujita (1994) and Krummel (2015, chapter 1).

³ One of these few attempts has been made by Itabashi Yūjin (2004). For less systematic but nonetheless important attempts at this, see: Ōhashi (1995), Ueda (1991), Nitta (1998).

⁴ Iwaki 2005, p. 60.

⁵ Iwaki 2005, pp. 59-60.

The main problem with Iwaki's assessment of Nishida is that he oversimplifies Nishida's position by focusing almost exclusively on the Buddhist or Eastern aspects of his philosophy. At the beginning of his article, he writes that Nishida "referred to Western thought in order to theoretically articulate the philosophical significance of Eastern thought to which he was accustomed."⁶ In this quotation and elsewhere in the article, Iwaki seems to be suggesting that Nishida was trying to provide a philosophical basis for Buddhist and Eastern thought. But Nishida was interested in not so much formulating a Buddhist philosophy as responding to Western problematics. Admittedly, he did this by incorporating ideas inherited from the Eastern and Buddhist traditions but that does not entail that he was trying to formulate a Buddhist philosophy. If we pay heed to the early development of the theory of *basho*, for example, it is clear that the influence of these traditions is only implicit in the background. The explicit focus was rather on the epistemological problematics developed in the Western tradition. Therefore, although it may well be true that there is something Buddhist or Eastern about Nishida's understanding of Kant, that does not mean that Nishida was trying to read Kant through Buddhist or Eastern lenses or, as Iwaki puts it, "Japanize Kant's philosophy."⁷ Such a misrepresentation of Nishida's philosophy as essentially Buddhist or Eastern simply underestimates his indebtedness to the transcendental tradition and hence undermines any effort to take this relationship seriously.

Another possible reason for the neglect of this issue is related to the first but comes from the general attitude within Nishida scholarship. Historically, Nishida scholarship has tended to focus on the religious dimensions of his philosophy, specifically its relation to Zen Buddhism and other Mahayana Buddhist traditions. This is due to the fact that Nishida's originality has often been identified with ideas such as the "place of nothingness" (*mu no basho*) that are evident appropriations of these Eastern religious traditions. Again, although I do not disagree that Nishida's originality can be tracked down to ideas that originate in the East, one also cannot ignore the fact that Nishida was responding to philosophical problematics developed in the West. More specifically, one cannot underestimate the extent to which he was working within the framework of the transcendental tradition in the 1920s. Thus, in order to really understand the originality of the theory of *basho*, we must carefully unravel the way in which Nishida was critically appropriating the ideas and method of the transcendental tradition. While some attempts have been made to thematize this aspect of Nishida's theory of *basho*, this field of research is still underdeveloped compared to attempts that thematize its Buddhist or religious aspects.

⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

From the above, we can see that the failure to examine Nishida's relationship to transcendental philosophy is closely tied to the tendency in the scholarship to overemphasize the Buddhist, Eastern or religious aspects of his philosophy at the expense of other aspects that are more in line with the Western philosophical tradition. But apart from the above reasons, there may be a more basic reason, namely, the sheer difficulty of articulating the influences on Nishida's thought. To begin with, Nishida is notorious for not giving exact references. Thus, there is a much more greater burden on the reader to trace down the influences. Furthermore, Nishida's criticisms in general are often sporadic and his way of appropriating the terminology of other thinkers is also quite specific. In general, it is important to bear in mind that Nishida's interest was never to primarily understand the work of a philosopher, say Kant. His interest was rather to reinterpret it in the light of his own concerns. Accordingly, criticisms that target Nishida's understanding of Kant, for example, solely on the basis that he misunderstands and distorts Kant simply miss the point since Nishida was never trying to do Kant scholarship. In this sense, then, Iwaki also seems to be making this mistake. This is also an important point regarding Nishida's appropriation of Husserl's noesis-noema distinction. In employing these terms, Nishida was not trying to be faithful to Husserl's original understanding. Rather, he reinterpreted them in a liberal manner to situate them within the framework of his theory of *basho*.

This chapter attempts to remedy this apparent neglect in the literature by articulating the "transcendental Nishida." Yet, in putting it this way, it must be emphasized that it is not my aim to solely establish that Nishida's early theory of *basho*, to a certain extent, works within a traditional transcendental framework. This is only one side of the coin. For, as with Heidegger, it is simply wrong to say that, with his theory of *basho*, Nishida was working within the bounds of a traditional transcendental framework. Rather, my aim is to articulate the extent to which Nishida works within a transcendental framework and the extent to which he goes beyond it. Put differently, then, it is my aim to clarify the ambivalent relation to the transcendental inherent in Nishida's early theory of *basho*. As we did with Heidegger's project in BT, I will proceed by asking how Nishida's early theory of *basho* accords (or does not accord) with the three criteria of transcendental philosophy, namely, (1) it is a search for the *foundation* of our experience and knowledge (though in a specific sense), (2) it employs *transcendental reflection*, and (3) it entails an *alteration of our relation to the world*.

1. Transcendental orientation of the early theory of *basho*

Before we proceed to assess the transcendental orientation of Nishida's early theory of *basho vis-à-vis* the three criteria of transcendental philosophy, let us bring to light some issues at stake in addressing his relationship to transcendental thought in the late 1920s. As suggested above, Nishida's early theory of *basho* embodies an ambivalence when it comes to its relation to the transcendental. On the one hand, it is a continuation of Kant's and Husserl's transcendental philosophy insofar as Nishida appropriates their approach. On the other hand, however, Nishida explicitly attempts to go beyond them with his notion of "the place of absolute nothingness." This latter aspect of discontinuity is what has gained most attention in the literature, and not without reason since the place of absolute nothingness is, in a certain sense, the crux of the theory of *basho*. Ōhashi Ryōsuke, for example, suggests that Nishida's historical contribution to philosophy lies in the very idea of the place of nothingness and claims that the turn to the place of absolute nothingness has seen no precedent in the history of philosophy.⁸

Now, one of the most pressing questions for us concerns the nature of this discontinuity, i.e. what this turn to the place of absolute nothingness signifies in relation to the transcendental, namely, does it signify an *abandonment* of the transcendental or, rather, a *radicalization*? It seems to me that commentators have remained ambiguous on this point, even when this discontinuity is spelled out with reference to the transcendental. For example, Ōhashi expressively contrasts the place of absolute nothingness with transcendental consciousness:

In the standpoint of absolute nothingness, seeing a table is not to see it as constituted by transcendental consciousness but rather, to nullify even that consciousness that sees and to see it in nothingness.⁹

Elsewhere, he contrasts the (self-)determination of *basho* (*bashoteki gentei*) with the idea of constitution by transcendental consciousness:

The determination of *basho* is not the same as the "constitution" of the noema by noetic consciousness. Rather, it is for the noema to get absorbed in [*botsunyū suru*] the noesis and for that noema to appear as the content of the noetic act itself. [...] That "the noema becomes absorbed in the noesis" is for the noesis-noema relation to dissipate in the "*basho*." Or put differently, it is the revealing of the world just as it is [*jijitsu sonomono no sekai no genshutsu*].¹⁰

⁸ Ōhashi 1995, p. 79.

⁹ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁰ Ōhashi 1995, p. 183.

We will examine the exact meaning of these passages later in this chapter. For now, suffice it to merely point out that Ōhashi contends that the place of absolute nothingness must be distinguished from transcendental consciousness insofar as the place of absolute nothingness supersedes the distinction between the noesis and noema or the constituting and constituted. In the place of absolute nothingness, there is supposedly neither seer nor seen.

Ueda Shizuteru makes a similar distinction between constitution by transcendental subjectivity and the self-determination of *basho*. Ueda argues that Nishida's notion of *jikaku* as seeing oneself within the self entails that one sees oneself *in nothingness* or *in nullification*: "[w]ithin the self [in the structure of *jikaku qua* the self reflecting itself within the self] is the same as 'making oneself nothingness' (or nullifying oneself)."¹¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, *jikaku* entailed being open to one's own place. According to Ueda, this openness can ultimately only be secured by opening oneself to the infinitude of openness (*mugen no hirake*) as the no-self (*jiko nashi*), or, more simply put, by completely nullifying the self.¹² This is the same point Ōhashi makes, namely that, in the place of absolute nothingness, the self is completely nullified and, in turn, one becomes open to the world purely as it reveals itself in itself. Furthermore, if one follows this line of thought of seeing oneself in nothingness or in nullification by completely nullifying the self, Ueda says that we are able to reverse the perspective and "see ourselves as the self-determination of the place." Thus he claims that, "[t]o see the self within the self" is simultaneously, to see oneself as the self-determination of the place that one is implaced."¹³ And he continues: "[h]ere we see one of Nishida's very specific and basic ideas, namely the 'the self-determination of the place' as opposed to the idea of constitution by (transcendental) subjectivity."¹⁴

Accordingly, both Ōhashi and Ueda distinguish the place of absolute nothingness from transcendental subjectivity or consciousness on the grounds that the former implies a standpoint whereby the self or the seer is nullified and hence the distinction between the constituting subject and the constituted object is also nullified. In the place of absolute nothingness, the world is not constituted by us, but, rather, we completely nullify ourselves such that "we" become open to the world as "it" reveals itself in itself. But what are the implications of this for the theory of *basho vis-à-vis* its relation to transcendental philosophy? If the place of absolute nothingness cannot be identified with transcendental subjectivity, what is its status? Could we say that it is in some sense a radicalization of transcendental subjectivity or is it rather something else? Ōhashi and Ueda remain ambiguous on this point. One of our tasks in the

¹¹ Ueda 1991, p. 321.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

following is thus to articulate and assess the proposed discontinuity between the place of absolute nothingness and transcendental subjectivity and, accordingly, to clarify the status of the former.

Now, despite the fact that this aspect of discontinuity has gained greater attention, the other aspect of the ambivalence in Nishida's early theory of *basho*, namely the continuity with Kant's and Husserl's approach, has not gone unnoticed either. In fact, Ōhashi also highlights the common thread that runs through Nishida's theory of *basho* and the transcendental tradition. In the context of explicating the three layers of *basho* as they first appeared in *From the Acting to the Seeing*, namely the *basho* of being(s), *basho* of relative nothingness and the *basho* of absolute nothingness, Ōhashi says, "[u]p until here [from the '*basho* of being(s)' to the '*basho* of relative nothingness'], one can observe the common line of thinking with Western idealism or modern epistemologies." And then he continues, "But when it comes to the turn towards 'the place of absolute nothingness,' there has been no precedent in the history of philosophy."¹⁵ In this way, then, Ōhashi clearly sees both the continuity and the discontinuity with the transcendental tradition that Nishida's early theory of *basho* embodies.

As a matter of fact, in the context of explicating Nishida's idea of philosophical reflection, Ueda also makes explicit note of the continuity. He argues that, for Nishida, philosophical reflection must start from pre-reflective experience, which is not only understood as prior to reflection but also experienced as the "limits of reflection" (*hansei no genkai*) or the "rupture of reflection" (*hansei no yabure*). Once this rupture is experienced, reflection and, indeed, transcendental reflection can then be employed to disclose the structures of reality. According to Ueda, this kind of reflection is different from that which merely begins with reflection and proceeds to higher-order transcendental reflection.¹⁶ Details aside for now, the important point is that Ueda seems to be suggesting that Nishida's philosophical reflection is more a radicalization of transcendental reflection than a complete rejection. We will be coming back to this point in assessing the second criterion (1.2).

Aside from Ōhashi and Ueda, others have also suggested that Nishida's early theory of *basho* embodies a transcendental orientation. In his extensive study of the relationship between Nishida's philosophy and Husserlian phenomenology, Mine Hideki notes that the central connection is found in the fact that "both thinkers lay down the most direct kind of intuition at the basis of knowledge and, through an analysis of consciousness, conducted a critique of cognition and a *transcendental critique* of reason."¹⁷ To take another example, in the context of articulating Nishida's philosophical position, Gereon Kopf has

¹⁵ Ōhashi 1995, p. 79.

¹⁶ Ueda 1991, p. 368.

¹⁷ Mine 2015, p. 323 (my italics).

argued that Nishida's theory of *basho* is committed to what he calls, "transcendental relativism," namely the position that "recognizes the need to postulate a transcendental ground of human knowledge, while at the same time acknowledging both the elusiveness of this ground and the fundamental epistemological limitations of human existence that condemns philosophical discourse to an inherent historicism and relativism."¹⁸

Perhaps in a more subtle way, we can also see evidence of this in the rendering of Nishida's terminology into English by some English-speaking commentators. For example, in the entry on Nishida Kitarō in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, John Maraldo has translated Nishida's term "*chōetsuteki jyutsugo*" as "*transcendental predicate*."¹⁹ John Krummel has done the same in his most recent work from 2015.²⁰ But insofar as the direct translation of "*chōetsuteki*" is "transcendent" (which is the translation I have used in Chapter 5 and the term Krummel adopts in his translation of the essay "*Basho*" with Nagatomo Shigenori), we can see that Maraldo's and Krummel's rendering it "transcendental" reflects their interpretation of the term. In fact, Nishida's own rendering of the term "transcendental" or "*transzendental*" in German is "*senkenteiki*," which was the common translation of the term at the time.²¹ Although Nishida occasionally uses this term to positively characterize his own position during the period of *jikaku*, he rarely does so after the period of *basho*. It is therefore all the more interesting that both Maraldo and Krummel render "*chōetsuteki*" as it appears in the context of the theory of *basho* as "transcendental." Unfortunately, however, neither of them explicitly provides a reason for this rendering.

In one way or another, all these studies highlight the transcendental orientation of Nishida's theory of *basho*. However, none of the studies provides a systematic account of this orientation. If they provide some account of this, they shed light on one aspect of this orientation, as in Mine's focus on Husserl or Kopf's focus on the later theory of *basho* (from the late 1930s onwards). Accordingly, it remains our task to put these puzzle pieces together to work out the bigger picture. For this purpose, and that of articulating the nature of the discontinuity with the transcendental tradition, our three criteria will prove

¹⁸ Kopf 2003, p. 24.

¹⁹ See Maraldo 2015.

²⁰ See e.g., Krummel 2015, pp. 25, 66, 68, 69.

²¹ The standard translation of "transcendental" in Nishida's time was "*senkenteiki*" (先験的), but it is now more commonplace to translate "transcendental" as "*chōetsuronteki*" (超越論的). This was prompted by Kuki Shūzo who first suggested this alternative translation on the grounds that the Japanese term "*senkenteiki*" which literally means "prior to experience," is inappropriate as a translation of "transcendental." In his lecture notes on "History of Western Modern Philosophy" from 1937 to 1938, Kuki points out that, for Husserl, the transcendental can also be found in experience and, accordingly, he says, "[i]n Husserl's use of the term, it makes no sense if one translates the transcendental as *senkenteiki* [prior to experience]. We should [instead] translate it as *chōetsuronteki* in accordance with its etymology." He also points out that *chōetsuronteki* is a better candidate in the sense that it preserves the essential relation that Kant had in mind to the term, "transcendent" (*chōetsuteiki*, 超越的) (Kuki 1981, pp. 41-44).

useful in working out a more systematic account of the transcendental orientation of the early theory of *basho*.

1.1. Transcendental foundationalism

The first set of questions we will be addressing is the following: *was Nishida engaging in a foundational project? If so, was he committed to transcendental foundationalism?* In other words, was Nishida searching for some kind of foundation in his early theory of *basho*? And, if so, could we then say that this foundation is understood in terms of *transcendental priority*, i.e. the specific priority relation between transcendental subjectivity and the world whereby the former constitutes the latter's meaning? For this latter question, we will have to examine the extent to which *basho* can be called transcendental subjectivity.

1.1.1. Search for a foundation

From the very beginning to the very end, Nishida's main concern was to find the *grounds* of knowledge and reality in experience prior to the subject-object split. Therefore, there is certainly a sense in which Nishida's philosophy is marked by the search for some kind of foundation. In fact, Ching-yuen Cheung has recently argued that Nishida was committed to a kind of foundationalism in his early period of pure experience. Cheung further labels Nishida a "neo-Cartesian foundationalist."²² By the term "neo-Cartesian," he explicitly has in mind Husserl's use of the term in the *Cartesian Meditations* where he states that transcendental phenomenology can be called neo-Cartesianism insofar as it attempts to rest philosophy on indubitable self-evident grounds while rejecting the doctrinal aspects of Cartesian philosophy.²³ According to Cheung, Nishida can also be called a neo-Cartesian insofar as he shares Descartes' aspiration for indubitable self-evident truths as the foundation of our knowledge. But, Cheung claims, this is not to say that Nishida's foundationalism is the same as Cartesian foundationalism. Following Ueda's interpretation of Nishida, Cheung points out that Nishida's starting point in pure experience is different from Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* or *ego sum ego existo* insofar as it does not take the

²² Cf. Cheung 2011, p. 70.

²³ Cf. Hua I, p. 43/1. Interestingly, as Cheung also notes, Nishida himself referred to Husserl's statement in *Cartesian Meditations* regarding neo-Cartesianism in his essay of 1944, "On Cartesian Philosophy" (2011, p. 70). Cf. NKZ 11, p. 179.

“I” as its starting point. Rather, in pure experience, there is no subject or object yet; it is “selfless” (*warenashi*), as Ueda puts it.²⁴ Cheung thus argues that Nishida did not attempt to found his philosophy on the “I” or “my experience” but rather, on selfless experience. According to Cheung, it is in *this* sense that Nishida can be called a neo-Cartesian.

Although Cheung limits his study to the period of pure experience in the *Inquiry*, insofar as the theory of *basho* is a development of the idea of pure experience, I believe the general line of Cheung’s argument can be applied to Nishida’s thought during the period of *basho*. But I also have some reservations about characterizing the kind of foundationalism at play in the theory of *basho* as neo-Cartesian. For, during this period, Nishida was more indebted to the Kantian idea of philosophy as the foundational science for all other sciences.²⁵ Accordingly, when Nishida develops his early theory of *basho*, he does not formulate his ideas as a search for indubitable self-evident truths. Rather, he explicitly formulates his problematic *vis-à-vis* Kant’s critical approach.

We can see evidence of this in his essay, “A Reply to Dr. Sōda” (1927). This essay was written as a reply to Sōda Kiichirō, who published a critical essay against Nishida’s position a few months after the publication of “*Basho*.” At the beginning of the essay, Sōda acknowledges the significance of Nishida’s works and attests that with the essay “*Basho*” and that published just before, “*Hatarakumono*” (“The Acting”), Nishida’s thought gained a systematicity that deserves to be called “*Nishida tetsugaku*,” literally, Nishida philosophy or philosophy of Nishida.²⁶ Ever since, it has been commonplace in the scholarship to refer to Nishida’s philosophy as *Nishida tetsugaku*. Now, despite this recognition, the prevalent tone of the essay is highly critical, and Sōda provides many reasons why Nishida’s philosophy is unacceptable. Since the purpose here is not to examine Sōda’s criticisms in detail, suffice it to say that their main crux was that Nishida steps beyond the bounds of theoretical reason by seeking the grounds of knowledge in that which is beyond reason and thereby falls into a pre-critical dogmatic metaphysical position.²⁷

In “A Reply to Dr. Sōda,” Nishida responds to these accusations. He does this not by directly answering Sōda’s questions but by critically formulating his position *vis-à-vis* that of Kant and the neo-Kantians. In other words, he rebuts Sōda’s criticisms by showing that his position is a critical position insofar as it arises from internally criticizing and developing Kant’s critical philosophy. Nishida proceeds

²⁴ Cheung 2011, p. 66.

²⁵ Nitta Yoshihiro points out that the fact that, in his theory of *basho*, Nishida began with our knowledge of objects and, specifically, with the structure of subsumptive judgments “S is P” reflects his intention to “give scientific knowledge in the West its proper place within the whole of knowledge” (1998, p. 22).

²⁶ Sōda 1998, p. 44.

²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 64.

by articulating the different kinds of knowledge and their order. He first argues that there are at least two kinds of knowledge, namely knowledge of objects and self-knowledge in the sense of *jikaku*. Then, he attempts to show that all forms of the former are based on the latter. Indeed, the aim of the “*Basho*” essay, wherein the theory of *basho* is developed, was meant to show that our knowledge of objects presupposes the self-mirroring structure of *jikaku*, or, in Nishida’s language, that the place of being(s) presupposes the place of nothingness *qua* consciousness. In “A Reply to Dr. Sōda,” however, the emphasis is put on clarifying his own position in relation to Kant’s critical position (as well as that of neo-Kantians). Accordingly, one can see that, in this essay, the theory of *basho* is framed more explicitly in epistemological terms.

Now, Kant’s aim in the first *Critique* was to clarify how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible. According to Nishida, critical knowledge is distinct from knowledge of objects, taken in a broad sense, due to its higher-order status. For critical philosophy takes knowledge of objects as its object of knowledge. Therefore, a critical philosopher already stands in a higher order position than that in which one cognizes objects.²⁸ For Nishida, this is to say that the critical philosopher is self-aware [*jikakuteki*] in the sense that he or she is aware of that which constitutes knowledge of objects *as pertaining to the structures of subjectivity*.²⁹ Accordingly, the critical philosopher already has *jikaku* (or is self-aware) in the sense of self-knowledge. (We should recall that *jikaku* in Japanese entails self-understanding.) Yet, according to Nishida, Kant stopped short of articulating the self-aware standpoint of the critical philosopher herself. As he says:

Kant clarified the possibility of mathematical knowledge and knowledge of pure physics. However, he did not clarify the standpoint of critical philosophy itself that criticizes such knowledge of objects.³⁰

Nishida’s criticism can be understood as a question concerning the possibility of critical philosophy itself. While Kant’s critical philosophy asked how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible, Nishida was asking how such a critical philosophy is itself possible. In fact, such criticism of Kant’s critical philosophy is of rather long standing and can be traced back to Kant’s own lifetime. Frederick Beiser tells us that such a meta-critical question, namely how we can know the necessary conditions for any possible knowledge, was a crucial question to which Kant failed to provide a sufficient answer:

The sad truth of the matter is that he [Kant] never developed a general meta-critical theory about how to acquire knowledge of the first principles of criticism. If self-knowledge was the most difficult

²⁸ Cf. NKZ 4, p. 291.

²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

³⁰ NKZ 4, p. 293.

of all reason's tasks, Kant was still not forthcoming with any advice about how this was to be achieved.³¹

Thus, Beiser observes that, while his successors accepted Kant's contention that the authority of reason depends on the possibility of criticism, they looked critically on the possibility of critical reason itself. Therefore: "[i]f the meta-critical problem is the point where Kant's philosophy ends, it is also the point where much post-Kantian philosophy begins."³² We can accordingly situate Nishida here as following the general line of post-Kantian philosophy that developed in the meta-critical direction.

Nishida, however, did not succumb to skepticism or dogmatism, as did some other post-Kantian philosophers.³³ Rather, he wanted to clarify the very grounds of critical philosophy itself upon which its validity can be established. In order to do so, Nishida sought to deepen the meaning of the critical philosopher's standpoint, or what he calls "the self-aware standpoint":

If knowledge of critical philosophy is allowed to stand beyond mere object cognition, to what extent is it possible to deepen this standpoint [of the critical philosopher]? The standpoint of knowledge that criticizes knowledge in the general sense, namely the self-aware standpoint [*jikakuteki tachiba*], must have its own positive standpoint. [...] What is our true self-awareness? Self-awareness must reflect deeply into itself. Knowledge of critical philosophy is established on this standpoint [i.e. standpoint of true self-awareness].³⁴

Nishida is here suggesting that, in order to clarify the self-aware standpoint of the critical philosopher, we must articulate the depths of self-awareness. Thus, the remainder of the essay is devoted to clarifying the deepest sense of self-awareness, or what Nishida calls "true self-awareness." We find him explaining that "true self-awareness lies wherein the consciousness of self-awareness itself disappears."³⁵ So long as there is still the consciousness of self-awareness, Nishida claims that there is still an objectified world that is seen in opposition to the subject. Consciousness is still "the place of relative nothingness" or what he also called "consciousized consciousness." When we go beyond this, we go beyond the realm of knowledge in the general sense (i.e. knowledge determinable by the knowing subject) and enter the realm of "intuition." By "intuition," Nishida means a kind of non-objectifying knowing and knowledge. This intuition, furthermore, not only transcends knowledge but establishes its possibility:

³¹ Beiser 1987, p. 7.

³² Ibid., p. 7.

³³ Cf. Ibid., p. 7.

³⁴ NKZ 4, p. 292.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 309.

I believe that intuition in this sense is the ultimate of knowledge. It is not itself conceptual knowledge but it is true knowledge and the fundamental condition for the formation of knowledge [in the general sense].³⁶

Accordingly, we can say that Nishida attempted to demonstrate the possibility of critical philosophy by articulating the deepest level of *jikaku* in the sense of self-knowledge. One could even say that, insofar as every kind of object-awareness disappears at this level, this kind of *self*-knowledge is in fact *selfless*-knowledge. In this regard, what Cheung said of Nishida's foundationalism in the period of pure experience equally applies to this period, namely, that Nishida sought to found his philosophy not on the "I" or "my experience" but, rather, on selfless experience.

Hereto, we have seen that Nishida's theory of *basho* as based on the place of absolute nothingness developed by critically advancing Kant's critical philosophy. Insofar as the place of absolute nothingness is beyond reason, both theoretical and practical, Sōda is correct in pointing out that Nishida goes beyond the bounds of reason. But is he also correct in claiming that Nishida falls back into a dogmatic metaphysical position? I think not. For the place of absolute nothingness is not a metaphysical posit as some-*thing* that lies beyond reason but, rather, it is the deepest level of our experience or awareness that is reached by critically approaching critical reason. At the beginning of the first essay compiled in *The Self-Aware System of Universals*, Nishida writes that he is not trying to articulate some kind of transcendent reality in the sense of Kant's thing-in-itself. He says, "I am not a metaphysician in that sense." He then continues: "I want to maintain the standpoint of reflection on conceptual knowledge itself. In this regard, I believe I am rather following the path of Kant's critical philosophy."³⁷ Nishida is indeed true to his words insofar as the procedure of getting at the deepest level of our awareness was accomplished by critically advancing rather than abandoning the critical philosopher's standpoint. Namely, Nishida argued that, if the critical philosopher is to be critical of his or her own position, he or she must inquire into the nature of self-knowledge that makes critical knowledge possible. Ultimately, such "self"-knowledge must be characterized by the complete eradication of the subject-object dichotomy. Accordingly, the place of absolute nothingness is that level of experience wherein there is no subject or object but only selfless-knowledge. As Nishida says in the essay "The Intelligible World" (1928), it is a kind of religious awareness.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., *ibid.*

³⁷ NKZ 5, p. 8. As Itabashi has pointed out, the original German term Nishida has in mind for what I have here translated as "critical philosophy" (*hihyō shugi*) is "*Kritizismus*" (2004, p. 8).

³⁸ NKZ 5, p. 180.

There is, however, still a related worry in seeking the foundation of philosophy in the place of absolute nothingness. Namely, if this place of absolute nothingness is beyond reason and described as a kind of religious awareness, is Nishida then trying to base his philosophy on religious experience? The answer is negative if we pay heed to the distinction Nishida makes between the *religious standpoint* and the *philosophical standpoint* at the end of the essay “Intelligible Universal.” The religious standpoint, he argues, is that which completely transcends conceptual knowledge. Accordingly, the religious experience of absolute nothingness cannot be described conceptually. The philosophical standpoint, on the other hand, does not leave the realm of knowledge behind. In Nishida’s words, “there must still remain a sense of ‘reflection or mirroring’ [*utsusu*].”³⁹ The aim of philosophy, then, is to clarify the way in which such experience must serve as the foundation of all our other knowledge. Therefore, from the philosophical standpoint, absolute nothingness is the *foundational knowledge for all our knowledge*. In other words, the very experience of absolute nothingness, which transcends conceptual knowledge can be distinguished from our conceptualization of it.⁴⁰ With this distinction at hand, we can say that Nishida did not seek the philosophical foundation in religious experience itself but, rather, in absolute nothingness as the ultimate kind of *knowledge* that founds other kinds of knowledge. Accordingly, Nishida claims:

Philosophy, in its pure sense, is the clarification of the various standpoints of knowledge and their structure *from the standpoint of knowledge that transcends all knowledge*. In other words, it articulates the various determinations of the universals from the standpoint of the universal of absolute nothingness that envelops these universals. If the self-determination of the universal can be called reason in a broad sense, then we can say that it is the self-reflection of reason itself.⁴¹

And shortly after, with Kant clearly in mind, we find Nishida calling his philosophy “radical critical philosophy” (*tetteiteki hihyō shugi*)⁴²:

I seek to clarify, from the standpoint of radical critical philosophy, the basis of the formation of knowledge and to give the different kinds of knowledge their own standpoint and claim as well as their interrelation and order.⁴³

What I wish to underline here is that, for Nishida, philosophical knowledge is the foundational knowledge that clarifies the foundation for all other knowledge. Accordingly, *philosophy is the*

³⁹ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁰ Nitta Yoshihiro has also underlined this distinction as one between “the experience itself” and “the logic that explicates the basic structure of the formation of such experience.” He further notes that this “crucial distinction” has not always been articulated in Nishida scholarship (1998, p. 43).

⁴¹ NKZ 5, p. 183.

⁴² For a detailed analysis of Nishida’s idea of the radical critical philosophy, see: Itabashi (2004).

⁴³ NKZ 5, p. 184.

foundational science for all other sciences. Therefore, we can say that, in his early theory of *basho*, Nishida was committed to a kind of foundationalism, and of a Kantian sort insofar as he was critically developing Kant's critical philosophy.

1.1.2. *Transcendental priority*

Now, this conclusion allows us to address the second part of the question, namely whether this commits Nishida to *transcendental foundationalism*. From what we have seen so far, it is tempting to say that it does. For if he was critically advancing Kant's critical position, does this not, by implication, commit him to the idea that the foundation of our experience is sought in the a priori structures of subjectivity? However, before we jump to any conclusions, we must reexamine the alleged *radicalness* of Nishida's "radical critical philosophy." For, as Ōhashi and Ueda argued, the self-determination of absolute nothingness cannot be identified with the constitution of objects by transcendental subjectivity and, accordingly, the place of absolute nothingness cannot be identified with transcendental subjectivity as traditionally understood. But if this is the case, then we apparently do not have a case where *transcendental subjectivity* has priority in the sense that it *constitutes* the meaning of objects. In order to clarify the nature of absolute nothingness in relation to transcendental subjectivity, let us examine Nishida's interpretation of Kant's transcendental consciousness and, insofar as Nishida comes to appropriate Husserl's phenomenology, also his interpretation of Husserl's pure consciousness.

According to Nishida, Kant's epistemic subject, namely transcendental consciousness or "consciousness in general," is still a kind of "determined *basho*" and not yet the *basho* that determines itself while being indeterminable by anything else. In the "*Basho*" essay, he claims that consciousness in general is the "entrance gate" (*kadoguchi*) from relative nothingness to true or absolute nothingness.⁴⁴ Nishida therefore understood consciousness in general as halfway to the ultimate place of absolute nothingness. While this is not too informative, it is nonetheless an important point since it suggests that Nishida understood *basho*, or, more specifically, the place of nothingness (*mu no basho*), as a kind of *transcendental place*. In fact, in "A Reply to Dr. Sōda," Nishida states that his *basho* corresponds to Kant's epistemic subject.⁴⁵ This claim, however, must be read with care since Nishida does not mean that *basho* is merely what the epistemic subject is for Kant. Rather, what he means is that, if we understand consciousness as *basho* (or as the place of nothingness), then the Kantian epistemic subject can be

⁴⁴ Cf. NKZ 4, pp. 234, 236.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 322.

interpreted as *basho*, though not the ultimate *basho*. Accordingly, we can even say that Nishida reconfigured transcendental consciousness as the place of nothingness.

Kant's position within the theory of *basho* gains more clarity in *The Self-aware System of Universals*. From the beginning of the development of the theory of *basho*, Nishida understood both Kant's epistemic subject and Husserl's transcendental ego as determined (and not determining) *basho* or consciousness (and not consciousnessing) consciousness.⁴⁶ In the "Intelligible World" (1928), however, Nishida refines his view and comes to articulate Kant's consciousness in general and Husserl's pure consciousness as two sides of the intelligible self.⁴⁷ He thus comes to acknowledge that they both noetically transcend consciousness and, as such, shed light on the consciousnessing consciousness or what he now calls the intelligible self. But, according to Nishida, both consciousness in general and pure consciousness are at the level of the *intellectual* intelligible self insofar as they do not reflect or mirror their own content but are only the formal correlate of the content of the self-aware universal.⁴⁸ As such, they are not *self-determining* (since, according to Nishida, the self is self-determining only when it reflects or mirrors its own content).

Now, according to Nishida, Kant's consciousness in general does not reflect its own content since, although it is object-constituting, it cannot itself be known. This was due to Kant's limited notion of intuition as that which is given in space and time. As such, and as we saw above, Kant could not sufficiently account for self-knowledge. For Nishida, this meant that consciousness in general is not self-determining. Husserl's pure consciousness, on the other hand, developed this intuitive side of subjectivity but at the expense of the object-constituting aspect.⁴⁹ Now, as Mine has aptly pointed out, this just sounds as if Nishida failed to understand Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.⁵⁰ For, when properly understood, transcendental phenomenology has everything to do with clarifying the structure of consciousness in its object-constituting role. But here we must clarify what Nishida understands by the object-constituting aspect of subjectivity. In Nishida's view, to constitute objects is to do so *within consciousness*. Or put differently, when objects are understood as constituted by subjectivity, we can say that they manifest themselves *to consciousness*. This much is in line with the phenomenological understanding of consciousness as the *dative of manifestation*. And here we can see how speaking of consciousness as a "place" is not at all foreign to Kant's idea of subjectivity as the "place" that makes object-cognition possible or Husserl's idea of subjectivity as the "place" of the manifestation of meaning.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 319; NKZ 12, p. 16.

⁴⁷ NKZ 5, p. 149.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 147.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149.

⁵⁰ Mine 2015, p. 324.

But Nishida also understood this consciousness as essentially self-determining, namely as the self-determination of the place. In other words, consciousness determines itself within itself. From the perspective of that which is implaced (or that which is determined), this is to say that the implaced must ultimately reflect or mirror the content of its own place (i.e. consciousness). And it is from *this* standpoint that Nishida criticizes Husserl. Namely, Husserl's pure consciousness does not reflect its own content insofar as objects cannot be said to reflect or mirror the content of consciousness. Accordingly, Husserl may have clarified transcendental consciousness as object-constituting but he failed to clarify that this object-constitution is in fact a kind of *self-constitution*, or, in Nishida's terminology, self-determination.⁵¹

As we saw in the previous chapter, Nishida saw that the intelligible self must deepen its self-awareness in order to reflect its own content. Accordingly, he saw the emotive self and the volitional self or what he also refers to as the moral self at the depths of the intelligible self. In fact, Nishida eventually comes to identify the "acting self" (*kōiteki jiko*) as the deepest level of the intelligible self. For Nishida, acting is "taking the external world that is beyond one's self into the self. The external events become the expressions of one's own content as the realization of one's will."⁵² For example, in writing an article, I am expressing my mind, so to say, but in doing so, I am incorporating the ideas of other thinkers and engaging in discussions that are in no way to be found inside my mind. My computer, books, pens and notebooks are also external objects that I employ and thereby "take in" in my activity of writing. And finally, when the article comes out, the typed words in the journal do not merely have *some* content and meaning but, rather, they are expressive of *my* embodied and embedded engagement with the thinkers, thought and things around me. In this way, the acting self is expressive of my own content.

Ultimately, however, the acting self cannot be the true consciousness or the true self that is self-determining while itself non-determined, that is, no-thing. Nishida explains somewhat cryptically:

Originally, the acting self is that which sees itself as nothing. [However,] as long as the acting self is still seen, this is not to see oneself as nothing. In this sense, the acting self is contradictory.⁵³

Nishida seems to be suggesting here that, so long as the acting self is still in some sense objectified or determined, as the agent of the action, for example, it is not the true self that "sees itself as nothing." For

⁵¹ Admittedly, Nishida's arguments for why Kant and Husserl's transcendental consciousness is not self-determining are not very clear. Furthermore, for Husserl, transcendental consciousness is not only object-constituting but also self-constituting. I am not sure whether this could save Husserl from Nishida's criticism but Nishida does not seem to have understood this point. Cf. Husserl's lectures, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1983-1917)* (Hua X).

⁵² NKZ 5, p. 155.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 445. This quotation is taken from his last essay in *The Self-aware System of Universals*. In this essay, "General Remarks," Nishida sums up his final standpoint as developed during these years.

Nishida, one can only really see oneself as nothing in some kind of religious experience whereby the self is completely nullified into nothingness. As he says: “[i]n religious experience, the seeing self in any sense of the word disappears and one becomes truly selfless. We then live in the deep internal life.”⁵⁴ In the self-awareness of absolute nothingness, “there is neither seer nor seen.”⁵⁵

Nishida accordingly understood Kant’s consciousness in general and Husserl’s pure consciousness as the intelligible self in its most formal and abstract form. For Nishida, consciousness must delve into its more emotive and volitional depths and concretize itself in our embodied and embedded activities. At this point, we can draw a parallel with Heidegger’s criticism of Husserl that intentionality must be based on an understanding of the being of Dasein as care. As we saw in Chapter 4, Heidegger argued that Dasein’s understanding of being is the condition of possibility for intentionality. Thus, according to Heidegger, a simple act of perception is only possible against the backdrop of my understanding of the pen as being involved in a complex in-order-to relation. For example, to perceive the pen as a pen is to perceive it as something useful for writing in order to conduct research. It thus points to my practical engagement with things. In this sense, as Crowell says, Heidegger’s phenomenology suggests how “practical intentionality” provides the condition of possibility for “act intentionality.”⁵⁶ But Crowell rightly adds that Heidegger did not merely substitute the theoretical subject for the practical one. As Heidegger says in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, the transcendence of Dasein cannot be understood theoretically, aesthetically or practically as it is not itself an ontic activity:

The central task in the ontology of Dasein is to go back behind those divisions into compartments to find their common root, a task that need not, of course, be easy. Transcendence precedes every possible mode of activity in general, prior to *νόησις* [noesis] but also prior to *ὄρεξις* [orexis, desire].⁵⁷

For Heidegger, I perceive the pen as something useful for writing in order to conduct research because ultimately I *care* about conducting research. This “care” is not an intentional act but a kind of *self-understanding*. It is because I understand myself as caring about conducting research that I act in light of specific norms such as writing an article. This kind of self-understanding is still “practical” and not theoretical in the sense that one understands oneself in one’s actions. We can see how this is quite similar to Nishida’s notion of the acting self whereby one “takes the external world into oneself” and “external events become the expressions of one’s own content as the realization of one’s will.” As such, in expressing

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 444.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 442.

⁵⁶ Crowell 2013, p. 26.

⁵⁷ GA 26, pp. 235-236/183.

ourselves through practical engagement with things external to us, we understand ourselves in our primordial constitution. As Nishida says, in acting, one does not lose the subjective self and become an external object but, rather, “we in fact become more deeply aware of ourselves.”⁵⁸ In this sense, then, both Heidegger and Nishida saw a deeper level of our being in the self-understanding that unfolds in our practical engagements.⁵⁹

Yet, from Heidegger’s point of view, it might be argued that Nishida is still working with the phenomenology of “consciousness” since the intelligible acting self is understood within the depths of consciousness or self-awareness. If one were to develop a phenomenology of our practical engagement, one cannot stay within the bounds of a phenomenology of consciousness. Such criticism may hold if Nishida was assuming that “consciousness” is a kind of inner realm that reaches out to the external realm. Indeed, if that were the case, he would be susceptible to Heidegger’s criticism of Husserl that he does not question the being of consciousness but merely assumes it. Yet, it is evident that Nishida never presupposed such understanding of consciousness. As we saw in the previous chapter, according to Nishida, consciousness is not primarily intentional but *self-mirroring*. It is not primarily a subject that transcends toward objects but it is the *place* that mirrors or reflects itself within itself. Accordingly, while Nishida’s theory of *basho*, based on the idea of *jikaku*, may be called a theory of consciousness, this does not make him susceptible to Heidegger’s criticisms of the phenomenology of consciousness. Nonetheless, in the 1930s and ‘40s, Nishida’s focus does move away from consciousness as such to our social and historical engagement with the world. While this move reflects not so much a rejection as a development of his early theory of *basho*, it might still be argued that his focus on epistemological problems limited the scope of what he could say about our practical engagements with the world.⁶⁰

It is also interesting that the problem of transcendence was one of the central problematics for both Heidegger and Nishida in the late 1920s. As we saw in Chapter 4, Heidegger explicitly formulated the problem of being in terms of that of transcendence. For Heidegger, the problem of transcendence was not

⁵⁸ NKZ 5, p. 155.

⁵⁹ In fact, Nishida himself acknowledged Heidegger’s advancement of Husserl’s phenomenology on the grounds that he developed the idea of the “self-awareness of the acting self” (NKZ 5, 463). However, he also claims that Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology still suffers from “the fundamental flaws associated with the phenomenological standpoint itself” (NKZ 5, p. 350). Nishida first mentions Heidegger critically in his essay, “The Relation Between the Implaced in the Self-aware Universal and That Which is Behind it” (1929). His critical remarks about Heidegger then continue in his subsequent essays from 1930 to 1934. His main critique was that Heidegger’s understanding of being is an “insufficient *jikaku*” (*fujyūbun na jikaku*). I will not go into the details of his critique as they are sporadic and difficult to understand. For discussions concerning such details, see: Ōhashi (1995, pp. 179-198) and Ōta (2012).

⁶⁰ In the preface for the reprint of the *Inquiry* written in 1936, he says: “That which I called in the present book the world of direct or pure experience, I have now come to think of as the world of historical reality. The world of acting-intuition – the world of poesis – is none other than the world of pure experience.” (NKZ 1, p. 7/xxxiii)

identical to the problem of intentionality, or what he called “ontic transcendence.” Rather, Heidegger wanted to show that ontic transcendence is possible only on the basis of “primal transcendence,” namely the transcendence of Dasein. Nishida, too, was dealing with the problem of transcendence in his early theory of *basho*, though, unlike Heidegger, he never explicitly stated so. This becomes clear when we recall his engagement with Lask’s idea of transcendent objects (things in themselves) and his questioning of how they can be known to us. Or, more generally, it is quite evident in his commitment to Kantian problematics in the late 1920s. Furthermore, it is also interesting that, like Heidegger with his primal transcendence, Nishida also conceived of the intelligible self in terms of a kind of transcendence, namely as the “transcendent self” reached through “noetic transcendence.” But it should be noted that, insofar as Nishida does not emphasize the *transcending* aspect of the self in the sense of going beyond itself, as Heidegger does with Dasein’s primal transcendence as projection, the specific meaning of the transcendence of the self does diverge in the two. For Nishida, the transcendent self is understood *vis-à-vis* the transcendent world where the highest values reside. As such, the transcendent self is understood not so much as transcending as that which sees truth, beauty and goodness. Despite this difference, it is interesting that both Heidegger and Nishida conceive the fundamental constitution of our being in terms of transcendence. Indeed, this brings us to an important point.

In Chapter 4, we saw how Heidegger’s focus on the problem of transcendence and his understanding of Dasein’s being in terms of primal transcendence highlighted the transcendental orientation of his thought. In a similar vein, we can say that Nishida’s focus on the problem of transcendence and his understanding of the intelligible self *as the transcendent self reached by noetically transcending our consciousness* shed light on the transcendental orientation of his philosophy. In fact, when Nishida contrasted “noetic transcendence” with transcendence in the direction of the noema, he was contrasting the former with the traditional idea of transcending this world. Accordingly, what Nishida refers to as noetic transcendence seems to correspond to the idea of going beyond into the transcendental dimension. Therefore, the intelligible self can be said to be *transcendental* and not *transcendent* in the traditional sense. In this way, then, Nishida’s articulation of the deepening of the intelligible self is a clear continuation of Kant’s and Husserl’s analyses of transcendental subjectivity.

At this point, then, we can agree with some commentators’ rendering of Nishida’s term that refers to consciousness, namely “*chōetsuteki jutsugomen*,” as “*transcendental* predicate plane” instead of the literal translation, “*transcendent* predicate place.” For we can say that, in transcending in the direction of the predicate, Nishida was seeking the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects. In this sense, consciousness is the transcendental predicate plane. But Nishida further sought the conditions of

possibility for the consciousness that is opposed to that which is determined in consciousness. In other words, Nishida also sought the conditions of possibility for intentionality. And by transcending in the direction of the noesis (i.e. via noetic transcendence), Nishida found the intelligible self to be the transcendental ground of intentionality. Both Nishida and Heidegger, then, sought the grounds of transcendence in the structures of transcendental subjectivity, which is not another “subject” opposed to the “object.” For Heidegger, this was Dasein’s understanding of being while, for Nishida, this was the intelligible self.

But the parallel with Heidegger seems to end just there insofar as Nishida saw an even deeper level of self-understanding or self-awareness whereby one “sees oneself as nothing” and understands oneself as absolute nothingness. In fact, Nishida himself criticizes Heidegger’s “understanding of being” as an “insufficient *jikaku*” (*fujyūbun na jikaku*) insofar as it stops short of an analysis of this deeper level of self-awareness.⁶¹ It is at this point that we can finally ask the pressing question we raised much earlier: *is this turn to absolute nothingness an abandonment of the transcendental or a radicalization of it?*

From what we have seen so far, there are good reasons to claim that the place of absolute nothingness is a *radicalization* of the transcendental rather than its abandonment. First of all, as I suggested above, Nishida’s early theory of *basho* is a search for the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects and our intentional consciousness. The intelligible self is accordingly understood as the transcendental ground of both. But Nishida went further and asked: what is the universal that envelops the intelligible universal? Put differently: what are the conditions of possibility for the intelligible self? Phrased this way, we can see that the place of absolute nothingness was sought as the ultimate condition of possibility or the *ultimate transcendental ground* of our knowledge of objects, intentionality and the intelligible self. Or, to use Nishida’s threefold description in “The Intelligible World,” the place of absolute nothingness is the ultimate transcendental ground of the world of nature, the world of consciousness and the world of intelligibility. Secondly, just as the intelligible self was reached through “noetic transcendence,” according to Nishida, the place of absolute nothingness or the self-awareness of absolute nothingness is reached through “*absolute* noetic transcendence.”⁶² We have already suggested that noetic transcendence is a kind of going beyond into the transcendental dimension. If we follow this line of thought, then absolute noetic transcendence toward absolute nothingness is none other than the deepening of the transcendental dimension.

⁶¹ Compare Ōhashi’s following statement: the “reason why Heidegger’s understanding of being is an ‘insufficient *jikaku*’ is because ‘understanding’ still drags the residuum of subjective consciousness. As such, it does not reach the level of ‘seeing oneself as nothing’ (1995, p. 184). See also note 59.

⁶² NKZ 5, p. 180.

There are, however, also reasons to doubt that absolute nothingness can be called transcendental “subjectivity.” To begin with, Nishida had claimed that even at the level of the intelligible self, there is no opposition between noesis and noema, subject and object. Or better, the deeper one goes into the depths of the intelligible self, the more the opposition dissipates. In this sense, then, though it may be transcendental, the “true” intelligible self, namely the practically acting intelligible self cannot be understood as subjectivity “constituting” objects. As Nishida says:

In the universal of intellectual intuition [i.e. the intelligible universal], such opposition in consciousness [the noesis-noema correlation] must dissipate. The noema must withdraw [*bossuru*] into the noesis. The objective world must be totally subjectified.⁶³

Nishida supposedly means here that the intelligible self does not have the world as its objective correlate. It is not opposed to the world as the “subject” is to “objects.” As he says about the moral self, one does not see the idea of goodness objectively. Rather, one can only practically experience the good in acting out one’s will.⁶⁴

But at the level of absolute nothingness, there is the further radicalization of getting rid of the last “seer” that was still remaining in the intelligible self. For, as Nishida had claimed, at the level of the intelligible self, “there is still the knower that knows itself as the seer of ideas.”⁶⁵ In absolute nothingness, however, there is merely “seeing without the seer.”⁶⁶ Whatever reveals itself is no longer seen as an object for us but, rather, is revealed as “*reality*” *realizing itself in “us.”* As I stressed in the previous chapter, “‘reality’ realizing itself in ‘us’” is a very different phenomenon from “objects manifesting themselves in consciousness.” In the former, the actualizing of “reality” is coupled with my understanding that “I” am absolutely no-thing but the realizing of “reality.” The self has completely nullified itself so as to make room for “things” to realize themselves as they are in themselves. In this sense, then, I am in agreement with Ōhashi when he claims that “[t]he determination of *basho* is not the same as the ‘constitution’ of the noema by noetic consciousness.”⁶⁷ For, in the self-determination of absolute nothingness, there is no-thing that is doing the determining. That which is self-determining is absolute no-thingness. From the above considerations, then, although we can maintain that absolute nothingness is the ultimate transcendental ground of our experience, it cannot be called a “subjectivity” that is said to “constitute” objects. For absolute nothingness is the transcendental ground that determines reality in complete self-negation.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 158.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 175.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 442.

⁶⁷ Ōhashi 1995, p. 183.

Furthermore, from this standpoint, the distance to Dasein's understanding of being is clear-cut, for Dasein is still some-*thing* that projects the understanding of the being of objects and the world. In other words, it is still posited. As such, although Heidegger too saw the ground of the subject-object relation in Dasein's being, which is not itself a subject standing over against objects, from Nishida's standpoint, "Dasein" has yet to "see itself as nothing."

1.1.3. Weak transcendental foundationalism

Let us now come back to our main concern, namely whether Nishida is committed to transcendental foundationalism in his early theory of *basho*. Insofar as Nishida's idea of the place of absolute nothingness cannot be said to be a kind of "subjectivity" that "constitutes" objects, we do not seem to have the specific priority relation involved in transcendental foundationalism. Nevertheless, I believe that we can still say that Nishida is committed to a *weak* transcendental foundationalism to the extent that there is a kind of priority relation at work in his early theory of *basho* that resembles the one above.

At the basis of Nishida's theory of *basho* lies the basic idea of the self-determination of the place or universal. One of the characteristic features of this idea is that it is coupled with the self-determination of the implaced or the individual. In this sense, there is a *symmetrical* determining relation. For example, a red object expresses the universal, redness, and, as such, the individual red object is a self-determination of the concrete universal, redness. Simultaneously, however, since the concrete universal would be only an empty concept without its particularizations, the concrete universal, redness, can be seen as the self-determination of the particular redness in the individual object. Or let us take the example of my *jikaku* as a PhD student. In the previous chapter, we saw how my *jikaku* as a PhD student is only possible by being open to the surroundings that make this possible, say the academic community. Accordingly, my individuality, just as with any other individual PhD student, is an expression, or a self-determination, of the academic community. At the same time, however, since the academic community would be an empty concept without its members, it can be said to be the self-expression (i.e. self-determination) of the individual members, including myself as a PhD student. In this way, Nishida tried to emphasize the reciprocal relationship between the universal and the individual, the place and the implaced.

At the same time, however, Nishida's early theory of *basho* was characterized by the prioritization of the predicate over the grammatical subject, the universal over the individual and the noesis over the noema. This is most evident in his methodology of seeking the grounds of judgment in the *transcendent*

(or transcendental) predicate plane or the grounds of intentionality in *noetic transcendence*. But it is also evident in the way he formulates his own “logic” at the time, namely as predicate-oriented. Later on, he comes to explicitly articulate this as “predicate logic” (*jutsugo no ronri*) in opposition to what he calls the “logic of the grammatical subject” (*shugoteki ronri*) or “object logic” (*taishō ronri*).⁶⁸ By the latter, Nishida means the kind of thinking that prioritizes objects and the objectified. For Nishida, Aristotle’s logic is a typical case of the latter in that Aristotle sought the grounds of judgment in individual objects defined as that which is subject but never predicate. In reversing this logic and seeking that which grounds judgment in the direction of the predicate, Nishida saw himself as pursuing predicate logic. For Nishida, this is the kind of logic that prioritizes the objectifying act and the non-objectified over the objectified. Now, Nishida saw that Kant had also pursued predicate logic insofar as Kant sought the ground that unifies our cognition of objects in consciousness in general which, for Nishida, corresponds to the intellectual intelligible self. In this way, Nishida’s early logic of *basho* can be said to be a continuation of Kant’s transcendental logic.

As Krummel rightly notes, however, Nishida eventually comes to seek the unity or ground of judgment and cognition not so much in the predicate but in the dialectical interplay between the opposing terms:

At this stage in his lifework [the 1930s] Nishida founds their unity by taking it beyond his earlier 1920s predicate-oriented formulation of the epistemology of place. He reformulates their unity this time more explicitly in light of the contextual matrix of the world of interactivity as a contradictory identity between grammatical subject and predicate, the transcendent object and the transcendental predicate, epistemological object and subject, world and self, universal and individual.⁶⁹

As a matter of fact, this is an important observation that underscores the presence of the prioritization of the predicate in the late 1920s that is later revised in the 1930s. Upon coming to see the deficiency of predicate logic, Nishida eventually started putting more emphasis on the symmetrical relationship between the two opposing terms. Accordingly, as Krummel attests above, in the 1930s and 1940s, Nishida develops his theory of *basho* into a dialectical logic or what he calls “dialectic of place” (*bashoteki benshōhō*). The dialectic of place is peculiarly dialectical in that, unlike Hegel’s dialectic, which seeks to sublate the oppositions, it seeks unity in the non-reducible oppositions, or, in Nishida’s terms, “absolute contradictory self-identity” (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu*). Immediately after the above quotation, Krummel goes on to explain this change in Nishida’s thought:

⁶⁸ For example, see: “Logic and Life” (*Ronri to seimei*, 1936) in NKZ 8, pp. 273-394.

⁶⁹ Krummel 2015, p. 109.

Although the basic idea is the same, this slight alteration in the 1930s reflects further caution on Nishida's part to preclude any uni-directional prioritization of noesis over noema, determining act over determined content, predicate plane over grammatical subject, and epistemological subject over object. Instead, he emphasizes the balance of the two opposing terms in terms of their contradictory self-identity. He wants to avoid engendering any tendency that, on the basis of his earlier predicate-oriented logic, would incline in the direction of an idealist monism or transcendentalism.⁷⁰

Krummel's observation above, namely that Nishida's move towards a dialectical logic in the 1930s "reflects further caution on Nishida's part to preclude any uni-directional prioritization of noesis over noema," is crucial for my discussion here. For it allows us to characterize Nishida's early (but not later) theory of *basho* as prioritizing the predicate over the grammatical subject, the universal over the individual and the noesis over the noema.

Moreover, it also allows us to properly understand Kopf's following statement, which *prima facie* puts some pressure on my claim: "even though Nishida orients his logic towards the predicate, his model [of the logic of *basho*] is too radically dialectical to allow for the self-determining universal to be accorded primacy over the self-determining individual."⁷¹ In light of the above observation, we can say that this is true of Nishida's mature theory of *basho*, which is what Kopf mainly focuses on, but not necessarily true of his early theory of *basho* in the 1920s. Clarifying this difference is all the more important since, based on his view that the logic of *basho* is "radically dialectical," Kopf argues that Nishida is an anti- or non-foundationalist. According to Kopf, although Nishida acknowledges the transcendental ground of our experience, insofar as he sought this in the absolute contradictory self-identity, it precludes his finding any absolute foundation. Calling this kind of position "transcendental relativism," he concludes:

Like transcendental relativism, Nishida's philosophy acknowledges a transcendental ground but at the same time realizes its absolute elusiveness, thus barring philosophy from absolute truth claims.⁷²

Now, although I am quite sympathetic to Kopf's arguments, I believe their force depend on the dialectical logic that, according to my view as well as Krummel's, only becomes pronounced in the 1930s. Accordingly, while Kopf's arguments are interesting and call for further consideration, I do not think his arguments in favor of transcendental relativism have much bearing on Nishida's early theory of *basho* in the late 1920s.

From the above considerations, we can derive the following conclusion. On the one hand, Nishida's idea of the place of absolute nothingness cannot be said to be a kind of "subjectivity" that "constitutes"

⁷⁰ Ibid., *ibid.*

⁷¹ Kopf 2003, p. 33.

⁷² Ibid., p. 45.

objects. As such, Nishida is not committed to the kind of transcendental foundationalism we find in Husserl, Kant and Heidegger in BT. On the other hand, however, to the extent that, in his late 1920s, Nishida prioritizes the predicate over the grammatical subject, the universal over the individual and the noesis over the noema, the place of absolute nothingness is, despite its appearance to the contrary, nonetheless given a privileged role as the transcendental ground of our experience. In this sense, then, we can say that Nishida's early theory of *basho* is committed to weak transcendental foundationalism.

1.2. Transcendental reflection

The second question we need to address is whether we can say that Nishida employed a second-order reflection into the conditions of possibility for our experience, namely transcendental reflection. The problem of reflection, and specifically philosophical reflection, has a peculiar place in Nishida's philosophy. On the one hand, to the extent that he does not thematize philosophical reflection as such in his writings, it seems that it was not so much a "problem" for Nishida. On the other hand, however, if *jikaku* can be understood as a special form of reflection, then the problem of reflection belongs to the very core of his philosophy. Indeed, although philosophical reflection is never or very rarely thematized as such, Nishida was very keen to clarify the method of philosophy and, on many occasions, he speaks of the "standpoint of philosophy." For him, this means clarifying the particular method of philosophy in distinction from the other methods and their standpoints. Accordingly, Nishida does discuss philosophical reflection throughout his writings, albeit indirectly.

In fact, our investigations up to this point have already pointed to a positive answer to the question of whether Nishida is employing transcendental reflection. For in seeking the transcendental ground of the three "worlds," namely the world of nature, the world of consciousness and the world of intelligibility, we can certainly maintain that Nishida was following Kant's (and, for that matter, also Husserl's) transcendental method. Nishida was not undertaking a first-order inquiry that thematizes objects with a view to determining their real properties but, rather, a second-order inquiry into the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects (and for intentionality and the intelligible self). Perhaps it is nowhere more evident that Nishida was explicitly following Kant's critical or transcendental method than in his pronouncement of doing "radical critical philosophy."

But it is precisely at this point that we need to question the *radicalness* of this "radical critical philosophy," this time with regard to its method. For, in furthering Kant's critical philosophy by questioning the possibility of critical philosophy itself, we can say that Nishida was also questioning the

possibility of reflection itself. Namely, it was Nishida's contention that, although Kant had, through transcendental reflection, clarified the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of objects, he failed to clarify the conditions of possibility for transcendental knowledge itself. Put differently, he failed to clarify the kind of reflection that enables knowledge of transcendental knowledge, or, more simply, self-knowledge (i.e. knowledge of the structures of subjectivity). But, according to Nishida, this is where "reflection" finds its limits. He thus argues, as we saw in "A Reply to Dr. Sōda," that one must seek self-knowledge *not* through reflection but in "intuition" whereby one completely nullifies oneself and gives oneself over to things. Since there is no subject opposed to an object in intuition, this kind of pre-reflective experience is also prior to the subject-object split. Accordingly, we can see Nishida here reformulating his basic idea in the *Inquiry* to ground reality in pure experience, namely that experience prior to the subject-object dichotomy. *But if this is the case, then isn't Nishida giving up transcendental reflection in favor of a kind of non-reflective intuitive experience?*

I think that Nishida is not so much giving up transcendental reflection as radicalizing it. For what Nishida is doing is not dogmatically positing pre-reflective experience prior to the subject-object split but, rather, philosophically reflecting on the transcendental grounds of our experience and pointing to the pre-reflective experience prior to the subject-object split. In this sense, Nishida is radicalizing transcendental reflection *by taking it back to its pre-reflective origin*. As Ueda says: "[i]nsofar as philosophy is a reflective discipline, reflection on the pre-reflective is a form of radicalized reflection."⁷³ But it must also be emphasized that, for Nishida, this pre-reflective origin is completely rid of the subject-object dichotomy to the extent that there is not even a pre-reflective "self."⁷⁴ This is where the true radicalness of Nishida's philosophical reflection lies. For Nishida, philosophical reflection must reflect on the very ground of experience, which is ultimately *selfless*.

⁷³ Ueda 1991, p. 368.

⁷⁴ In my article from 2011, "Later Nishida on Self-awareness: Have I lost myself yet?", I presented Nishida's later account of *jikaku* in contrast to the phenomenological and higher-order accounts of self-awareness. There, I argued that Nishida ultimately challenges the phenomenological analysis (most famously offered by Sartre) that consciousness is necessarily positionally aware of an object and non-positionally (pre-reflectively) aware of itself. According to Nishida, in pure experience, one is *merely* intransitively conscious and *not* positionally aware of anything. In other words, "there is a mode of experience devoid of any sense of differentiation, even of a minimal sort." Cf. Ishihara (2011, p. 206). One of the aims of the article was to show that Nishida's philosophy has much to offer to contemporary debates on self-awareness, both in the phenomenological and analytic traditions. Although such a dialogue is only starting, attempts to put the Indian Buddhist tradition in dialogue with these traditions are increasing. For a significant contribution to this dialogue, see the volume co-edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson and Dan Zahavi, *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions* (2011). This work also proves to be important in bringing Nishida into dialogue with these traditions, as the essays shed light on important debates that lie at the intersection of the dialogue between the Eastern and Western traditions.

At this point, let us turn to Ueda's distinction between two kinds of reflection, what he calls "small turn reflection" (*komawari no hansei*) and "big turn reflection" (*oomawari no hansei*).⁷⁵ According to Ueda, while the former kind of reflection is prevalent in the Western philosophical tradition, Nishida's philosophical reflection belongs to the latter. While Nishida himself does not make this distinction, it is helpful in understanding the radicalness of his concept of reflection. The following is a general outline of Ueda's discussion.⁷⁶

As his starting point, Ueda takes an example from one of Nishida's early writings: *the experience of looking at a flower*.⁷⁷ Competing views exist on whether or not there is some sort of "I" or "self" in such experience prior to reflection. In a very rough sketch, the Buddhist tradition denies that there is while the Western philosophical tradition argues otherwise. Rather than choosing one way or the other, Ueda brackets this question. Instead, he begins with the relatively uncontroversial point: *when we reflect on the experience, we become aware of the "I" that is reflecting on the experience*. At this point, Ueda points to two directions our thinking can take from this evident starting point. On the one hand, one can think of this whole experience from the perspective of the reflecting "I" and interpret our pre-reflective experience of looking at the flower as constituted by the higher-order "I". According to this view, the "I" is the condition of possibility for our experience. We come to see that our initial experience of seeing the flower is only possible on the basis of its constitution by the "I." Indeed, Ueda sees the culmination of this way of thinking in the idea of transcendental subjectivity.⁷⁸ Ueda argues that this is a way of *articulating* the "I" that is implicit in pre-reflective experience.

The other direction, on the other hand, proceeds to *eliminate* the "I." This view also acknowledges that, when we reflect on our initial experience, we come to see that the "I" constitutes the experience. But instead of then interpreting the initial experience as that which is only possible on the basis of the "I," the initial experience is *understood* as the "original experience" (*genkeiken*) from which the "I" arises (together with the constituted experience). Here, Ueda emphasizes that it is not as if we come to interpret the initial experience in this way upon reflection. The understanding of the initial experience as the original experience is unachievable in reflection. Rather, it is something that *only* our experience can

⁷⁵ Ueda 1994, pp. 103-104, 108-113.

⁷⁶ I am here presenting the general outline of Ueda's discussion in two of his works from 1994 (pp. 98-119) and 2000 (pp. 165-170).

⁷⁷ Nishida raises this example in his early writing, "Fragmentary Notes on Pure Experience" (*Junsuikeiken ni kansuru danshō*) published posthumously. Though the exact years in which these notes were written are unknown, they were supposedly written around the time of the *Inquiry*. Cf. NKZ 16, pp.267-572. See also the afterward written by Tokuryū Yamauchi (NKZ 16, pp. 673-674). In Ueda's work from 2000, he gives a different example of the experience of looking at a mountain but the idea remains the same.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ueda 2000, 167.

reveal. Thus, in the original experience, *one simply understands oneself as completely nullified and selfless*. As Ueda says: “[s]uch original experience is given in a ‘selfless’ manner [...] through the breaking down of the subject (‘I’) into nothingness.”⁷⁹ He also calls such experience “*kaku*” (覚) meaning “awakening.”⁸⁰ As this word suggests, in some sense, this is a kind of religious experience. But it is not something so inaccessible either. As a typical case of such awakening experience, Ueda refers to Nishida’s description of pure experience in the opening to the *Inquiry*: “[i]n ‘the moment of seeing a color, hearing a sound,’ the subject-object frame breaks and one becomes open to the clearing. This is ‘awakening’ [*kaku*, 覚].”⁸¹

We may also recall my example in the previous chapter of listening to music. In my experience of complete absorption in the flow of the music, I do not experience that the music is manifesting to me. “I” am simply not there anymore. Now, one may admit to having such momentary experiences from time to time but deny that they amount to any kind of “awakening” experience. There is nothing “religious” about it. To be sure, most of the time, after those momentary experiences, we just go on with our lives and do not give them much thought. But, when those experiences are powerful enough to pull us out of our ordinary way of understanding ourselves (that is, as self-enclosed, self-sustaining), then this experience becomes an *awakening* experience. It is not that we give it more thought. Rather, the experience simply reveals that “I” am no-thing but the realizing “reality,” i.e. that “I” am selfless. It is in such experience that we are led to say, “I am the music, and the music is me.”

So then, under this view, reflection takes the following form: at first, there is the selfless presence of the “flower.”⁸² This is the experience of “*kaku*.” Then, upon “coming back” to oneself, one reflects on this experience and says, “I” am seeing the flower. It is here that the subject-object dichotomy arises for the first time. Furthermore, it is here that *ji-kaku* arises. This kind of reflection (namely, reflection *qua jikaku*) is very different from that under the first view since one has understood its non-reflective origin in the awakening experience. Thus, coming from such experience, the reflective I says: the “self is the self *in self-negation*,” or, the “self is – *selflessly* – the self” (*ware wa warenarazushite ware dearu*).⁸³ Ueda calls this kind of reflection “big turn reflection” since it turns back on itself through self-negation. In contrast to this, he calls the other kind “small turn reflection” since it simply comes back to itself without self-negation. As such, it merely says, “the self is the self” (*ware wa ware dearu*).

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 146; Ueda 1991, p. 250. Ueda specifically describes such “*kaku*” as the awakening to one’s true mode of being in the clearing (1991, p. 372).

⁸¹ Ueda 1991, p. 250. The original reads: 「「色を見、音を聞く刹那」、意識を閉ざしていた主客の枠が破れ、開けに開かれます。これが「覚」です。」

⁸² Cf. Ueda 1994, p. 102.

⁸³ Ibid., ibid.

Now, according to Ueda, Nishida's *jikaku* exemplifies the second kind of reflection. "*Jikaku*," which literally means "self-awakening" ("ji" means "self", "kaku" means "awakening"), is the reflective self-awareness that is ultimately grounded in the experience of "*kaku*." When the experience of "*kaku*" (which is itself non-reflective) is brought to light through reflection, one becomes reflectively aware of such non-reflective experience. According to Ueda, this is what Nishida means by "true *jikaku*" or "true self-awareness."⁸⁴ But if *jikaku* is a kind of philosophical reflection, as Ueda seems to be suggesting, then the pertinent question is: *what is its relation to transcendental reflection?* Since Ueda identifies traditional forms of transcendental reflection as the first kind of reflection, which is oblivious to the self-negating moment in reflection, this may give one the impression that Ueda understands Nishida's *jikaku* as a *non-transcendental* kind of reflection. But, contrary to appearances, Ueda seems to be suggesting that *jikaku* is in fact a radicalized form of transcendental reflection. Let us quote at length the passage where he makes this point most explicitly:

Instead of beginning with reflection and proceeding transcendently to a higher-order reflection ("reflection of reflection"), Nishida goes the other way around in "taking a step back by turning the light in upon oneself" [*ekōhenshō no taihō*].⁸⁵ First, the rupture of reflection [*hansei no yabure*] is experienced which then gives rise to the awareness of the limits of reflection. Then, through such awareness [*jikaku*] of its limits, the limits are permeated and the space of reflection expands to the pre-reflective by way of returning to its origin. From there it proceeds to reflection and then on to reflection of reflection (*now having the function of transcendental reflection*).⁸⁶

It will help to rephrase this difficult passage in light of our earlier discussion: for Nishida, *jikaku* qua philosophical reflection differs from traditional transcendental reflection in that it begins with the "rupture of reflection" (that is, the experience of "*kaku*"). From here, philosophical reflection proceeds to reflect on the conditions of possibility for our experience. Therefore, *jikaku* is a kind of transcendental reflection insofar as it is a second-order reflection into the conditions of possibility of our experience. Nonetheless, it differs from transcendental reflection traditionally understood since *jikaku* ultimately reflects on the very limits of reflection whereby the subject-object dichotomy collapses and there is simply selfless experience.

⁸⁴ Cf. Ueda 2000, p. 148. He says: "[w]hen '*kaku*' becomes *jikaku* (self-aware), this *jikaku* is true self-awareness." Although he is not explicitly referring to Nishida here, it is clear that he has Nishida's *jikaku* in mind. For example, as he elsewhere says, "Nishida's *jikaku* which has '*kaku*' at the very basis..." (1991, p. 372).

⁸⁵ "*Ekōhenshō*" (回光返照) is a phrase that appears in the Zen Buddhist text, *The Record of Linji* (*Rinzairoku*). The meaning of the phrase is: turning the light in upon myself. Sasaki explains that "[t]he phrase may be said to describe the essence of Buddhist meditation – to take the mind, ordinarily occupied entirely with discursive thought and external phenomena, and direct it inward toward the source of the mind's activities" (Sasaki 2009, p. 266).

⁸⁶ Ueda 1991, p. 368 (emphasis added).

Furthermore, Ueda also writes that, for Nishida, *jikaku* is ultimately what he later calls, “place-like *jikaku*” (*bashoteki jikaku*).⁸⁷ In the previous chapter, we already saw how “place” is implied in the notion of *jikaku*. Namely, to be self-aware in the sense of *jikaku* is to understand one’s place (which entails being disclosed to one’s situated place). Nishida’s later notion of “place-like *jikaku*,” then, underlines this “place” in *jikaku* but it does so in such a way that *jikaku* is ultimately understood as the *reflection of the place itself*. As Ueda puts it: “[*j*]*jikaku* is [...] to be disclosed to ‘one’s situated place’ (this event of disclosedness is ‘*kaku*’) and to see the self in the reflection of the clearing of the place (in the light of the clearing).”⁸⁸ For example, as a PhD student, I am disclosed to the academic community. In such disclosedness, not only do I find my specific role as a PhD student but, if my awareness deepens, I can also find myself as the “reflection” of the academic community. Put differently, I find myself as the self-determination of the academic community. This is my place-like *jikaku* as a PhD student. Let us call this place-like *jikaku* “*chorological reflection*.” (Here, I am following Krummel’s suggestion that Nishida’s *basho* is akin to Plato’s *chōra* in the sense that its essence is to withdraw and make room for things.⁸⁹) *Chorological reflection*, then, is the disclosing of oneself to one’s situated place and finding oneself as the reflection of the place. Thus, in the *jikaku* of absolute nothingness, when the self is completely nullified, one is disclosed to the realizing “reality” and finds oneself as the place of absolute no-thingness wherein “reality” realizes itself. To employ Nishitani’s language, I find myself as the “self-realization of reality itself.”⁹⁰

Let me now summarize the way in which Nishida’s *chorological reflection*, based on “*jikaku*,” transforms transcendental reflection. The crucial point is the *self-negating* moment of *jikaku* where the conditions of possibility of experience are revealed through the self-negating nature of consciousness. It is worth noting that *chorological reflection* is not a mere theoretical method but a kind of self-awakening that finds its origin in the Buddhist practice of realizing the non-substantiality of the self. *Jikaku* is thus comparable to Heidegger’s hermeneutic reflection in the sense that they both understand transcendental reflection in terms of becoming wakeful to one’s situation. Indeed, in this sense, Nishida is engaging in a kind of hermeneutic reflection. But the two ideas also differ insofar as Heidegger did not appear to recognize the level of absolute nothingness. We will come back to this comparison at the end of this chapter. For now, let us continue clarifying Nishida’s *chorological* transformation of transcendental reflection. In *chorological-transcendental* inquiry, one reflects on the conditions of possibility for our

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 113. Cf. NKZ 10, p. 320.

⁸⁸ Ueda 1991, p. 372. The original reads: 「自覚とは [...] 「自己の居る場所」 (自己が置かれている場所) に開かれて (開かれるこの出来事が覚)、その場所に照らされて (その開けが光になって) 自己が見られることです。」

⁸⁹ Cf. Krummel 2015, p. 203. See also: chapter 5 (section 3.3 and note 103).

⁹⁰ Cf. Nishitani 1982, p. 5.

intentional experience, say, of looking at a flower. One then becomes aware of consciousness as the place of its manifestation. At this point, consciousness withdraws to make room for the flower to manifest itself. To be self-aware in such a mode of experience is to be disclosed to one's situated place. But, in such experience, consciousness has not fully negated itself. It is still a relative nothingness. Thus, *jikaku* deepens further, that is, further negates itself. And in complete negation, the ultimate transcendental ground reveals itself as absolute nothingness. In such experience, "one" is disclosed to one's place and finds oneself as the place of absolute no-thingness wherein "reality" realizes itself.

From the above, we can say that chorological reflection (or place-like *jikaku*) transforms transcendental reflection in the sense that it (1) makes transcendental reflection a matter of disclosing oneself *qua* self-negation and (2) ascribes transcendental reflection the soteriological role of awakening to the absolute no-thingness of oneself.

1.3. Alteration of our relation to the world

Finally, we can address our third question regarding the metaphysical implications of Nishida's early theory of *basho*: *does it entail an alteration of our relation to the world?* We saw in Chapter 2 that transcendental philosophy entails transcendental idealism. We also saw how this does not entail a first-order metaphysical position but, rather, a kind of *methodological standpoint* that has important metaphysical implications: *anti-(naive-)realism* and *the priority of transcendental subjectivity*. In Chapter 4, we saw how, despite its hermeneutic transformations, Heidegger's project in BT is still a kind of transcendental idealist position. Most importantly, Dasein was still a kind of transcendental subjectivity. Our discussion in the first section, however, has revealed that absolute nothingness cannot be called a transcendental "subjectivity" that "constitutes" the world (though it may still be called a transcendental ground). As such, Nishida's position in his early theory of *basho* does not entail transcendental idealism (though there is still a kind of weak transcendental priority of absolute nothingness). *But if Nishida gives up transcendental idealism, then what kind of transcendental position is it, if it can be called that at all?* In the following, I will attempt to provide an answer to this question by clarifying the metaphysical implications of Nishida's early theory of *basho*. I will do this by addressing the following two questions: (1) does Nishida's early theory of *basho* entail a methodological standpoint or a metaphysical position? (2) Does it entail *anti-(naive-)realism*?

It should be clear that the early theory of *basho* does not entail a metaphysical position. All metaphysical positions, realism and idealism alike, are interested in the first-order nature of objects. But

we have already underlined how Nishida distances himself from all first-order inquiries by following the transcendental method of seeking the conditions of possibility for our experience in the place of absolute nothingness. Therefore, Nishida's early theory of *basho* cannot entail a metaphysical position. Put differently, absolute nothingness is not a metaphysical ground. *So then, is it a methodological standpoint?*

I believe a Nishidean would be rather uneasy calling absolute nothingness a methodological standpoint. Part of the uneasiness, I believe, can be relieved by distinguishing the "philosophical standpoint" from the "religious standpoint" as we did earlier. While the latter is interested in the very experience of absolute nothingness, the former is interested in articulating how absolute nothingness can be understood as the foundation of all our knowledge. Accordingly, from the religious standpoint, absolute nothingness is non-reflective selfless experience. It is the awakening experience ("*kaku*") of the "music" realizing itself in "me" and my understanding that "I" am the place of absolute no-thingness wherein the "music" realizes itself. But from the philosophical standpoint, absolute nothingness is a methodological standpoint that clarifies the transcendental ground of our experience as the place of absolute nothingness. It is not necessary to have an awakening experience to employ chorological reflection. In this way, "*kaku*" and "*jikaku*" are not mutually implicative. Yet at this point, we may ask: *but what does it mean to clarify the transcendental ground of our experience as absolute nothingness?* Since we should distinguish between "*kaku*" and "*jikaku*," we cannot say that this means that we must come to an understanding by appropriating the fact that "we" are absolutely no-thing but "reality" realizing itself. Rather, it means that we can understand (without appropriation) what is meant by such phrases as "I am the music, and the music is me." But indeed this is not an easy task. For many, this is simply senseless or, if not senseless, metaphorical. In such experience, I am not *really* the music, they would say. We might metaphorically speak in that way, but that is not really what the case is. This is because such a way of understanding the world and ourselves is radically different from the way we usually understand ourselves. I would therefore suggest that, although chorological reflection does not require the awakening experience, one must at least be open to the possibility of such experience. Indeed, to the extent that chorological reflection is essentially related to the soteriological concern of self-awakening, it seems that one must even hold this as an ideal possibility. Accordingly, absolute nothingness is a methodological standpoint in the sense that it clarifies the transcendental ground of our experience. But, to the extent that chorological reflection is a matter of self-awakening, it is specifically a kind of standpoint that impels us toward understanding *and appropriating* the fact that "I" am the place of absolute no-thingness wherein "reality" realizes itself.

This specifically methodological character of absolute nothingness is somewhat similar to that of Dasein's understanding of being. As we mentioned earlier, since for both Nishida and Heidegger transcendental inquiry is essentially a matter of becoming wakeful to one's situation, the "philosophical" and "religious" (Nishida) or the "existential-ontological" and "existentiell-ontic" (Heidegger) are intricately bound together. For Heidegger, the roots of the existential analytic were said to be existentiell in the sense that the existential analytic depends on the existentiell possibility of Dasein's coming to an authentic self-understanding. This does not entail that one could not engage in an existential analytic if one had not already somehow come to authentic self-understanding in one's existence. Rather, it means that the existential analytic of Dasein motivates one toward authentic self-understanding in seizing upon it as one's existentiell possibility. Accordingly, the "roots" of the existential analytic are existentiell in the sense that one must understand one's own ontological constitution in one's ontic existence in order to have a "proper" understanding of the analytic.

Similarly, for Nishida, we could say that the roots of absolute nothingness are "religious" in the sense that the *jikaku* of absolute nothingness depends on our possibility to have such awakening experience (i.e. "*jikaku*" depends on the possibility of "*kaku*"). Again, this does not mean that we must have such an awakening experience to philosophically reflect on absolute nothingness. Rather, it means that philosophical reflection on absolute nothingness motivates one toward self-awakening. Thus, the "roots" of absolute nothingness are "religious" in the sense that one must have an awakening experience in order to have a "proper" understanding of absolute nothingness. In this way, the methodological character of absolute nothingness and the existential analytic are intricately bound to the "religious" and the "existentiell-ontic" respectively.

Let us now turn to our second question: *does the early theory of basho entail anti-(naive-)realism?* As underlined in Chapter 2, anti-(naive-)realism was one of the important metaphysical implications of transcendental idealism. Namely, transcendental idealism prohibits one's natural way of relating to the world, specifically taking the world as existing independently of us. While Nishida's early theory of *basho* does not entail transcendental idealism, it certainly has this prohibitive character, for one of the important aims of Nishida's threefold theory of *basho* was to show that the place of being(s) or the world of nature (i.e. the world of that which is determinable as object) is only made possible by the self-determination of consciousness as the place of nothingness and ultimately, by the self-determination of absolute nothingness. In this sense, the naive realist view of the world as existing independently of us is overcome from the standpoint of absolute nothingness.

Yet, if this alteration is different from seeing the world through transcendental subjectivity inasmuch as absolute nothingness does not constitute the world, *what does the world look like in absolute nothingness?* Let us refer back to Nishida's example that Ueda employs: "*I am looking at a flower. At this moment, the flower is me and I am the flower.*" As we pointed out earlier, such experience makes little (or only metaphorical) sense from the naive view of the world, where I exist independently of the flower and vice versa. However, when one completely negates oneself in absolute nothingness, there is no self (neither in the sense of object nor in that of subject) nor is there a flower (as object). Instead, there is merely *the pure experience of looking at the flower*. As Nishida would say, at "the moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound [...], there is not yet subject or object."⁹¹ The situation is similar in the case of complete absorption in the flow of a piece of music. There is neither I as subject nor music as object. In the pure experience of listening to music, there is simply the "music" realizing itself.

As these examples suggest, I submit that the alteration that takes place in the standpoint of absolute nothingness is one that radically challenges the substantialist view of the self and the world. Instead of holding fast to our common assumption that the subject exists independently of the object and vice versa, we are led to return to pure experience prior to the subject-object dichotomy. Or rather the awakening experience of the beautiful "flower" or magnificent "music" reveals pure experience as the "sole reality." And since pure experience is the most direct kind of experience, Nishida's radicalization of reflection is a "restoration of the most direct [experience]," to borrow Ueda's phrase.⁹² In this way, we can say that absolute nothingness alters our relation to the world in the sense that it challenges the substantialist view of reality and brings us back to the most direct experience prior to the subject-object split.

Finally, what does this conclusion have to say about the specific kind of transcendental position Nishida endorses in his early theory of *basho*? As claimed earlier, it cannot be understood as a transcendental idealist position since absolute nothingness is in no way to be understood as transcendental subjectivity. Nonetheless, it is still a transcendental ground of our experience. At this point, we may be tempted to resort to its opposite and say that it is a kind of transcendental realist position. But transcendental realism, as I see it, is an inconsistent position insofar as it maintains that transcendental subjectivity constitutes objects while somehow also maintaining that these objects exist independently of us. It is not necessary to go into any detail about how such a position might be defended. For Nishida's position undermines the very ground of the transcendental idealism-realism debate, namely whether

⁹¹ NKZ 1, p. 9/3-4.

⁹² Ueda 1991, p. 368.

objects exist independently of transcendental subjectivity. Such a question arises in the first place because the distinction between transcendental subjectivity and objects is understood as an irreducibly basic distinction. However, in Nishida's standpoint of absolute nothingness, there is absolutely no-thing but "reality" realizing itself. Since such "reality" is neither subject nor object, absolute nothingness as the transcendental ground of reality reveals or restores our direct experience of reality prior to the subject-object duality. Therefore, Nishida's transcendentalism entails a kind of "direct realism." To be sure, this is not the same as naive realism. Rather, since it calls for an awakening to experience prior to the subject-object dichotomy, perhaps we can call it something like "awakened realism."

2. Nishida's chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy in his early theory of *basho*

In this chapter, we have been examining Nishida's engagement with transcendental philosophy in light of the three criteria of transcendental philosophy. In the course of the investigation, it has become clear that Nishida is less of a transcendental philosopher than Heidegger in BT. Unlike Heidegger's project in BT, which still stays close to the core of traditional transcendental philosophy, Nishida's early theory of *basho* radically transforms all three criteria: firstly, it is *foundational* but only in the weak sense that absolute nothingness is still seen as a transcendental ground. Secondly, it employs *transcendental reflection* that is radically transformed through chorological reflection to disclose the conditions of possibility for our experience. Thirdly, it brings about an *alteration of our relation to the world* from our naive belief in the independent existence of objects and the world, to our direct encounter with the world in pure experience, rather than seeing the world through transcendental subjectivity. In conclusion, let us draw out the essence of Nishida's chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy in contrast to Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation.

Just as the core of Heidegger's transformation was found in the radicalness of hermeneutic reflection, I believe we can identify the core of Nishida's transformation in the radicalness of chorological reflection. Chorological reflection was the disclosing of oneself to one's situated place and finding oneself as the reflection of the place. Insofar as it is both a disclosing of and awakening to one's situated place, Nishida's chorological reflection can be said to be a kind of hermeneutic reflection. Accordingly, chorological reflection also transforms traditional transcendental philosophy from its theoretically detached method to an existentialist or soteriological appropriating method, one that calls for self-awakening. For both Heidegger and Nishida, transcendental inquiry is not a second-order inquiry that can

be detached from our first-order engagement with the world. Rather, it is a second-order inquiry that takes hold of our everyday engagements to reveal our primordial way of relating to the world, which is usually covered-up. In this sense, what Heidegger said of the existential analytic of Dasein applies equally to Nishida's early theory of *basho*: it is a way of doing violence to the everyday interpretation of ourselves. They both have the character of wresting it from its covered-up-ness.

Chorological reflection in the late 1920s, however, was not true to the hermeneutic method in the sense that it did not pay heed to the facticity and historicity of our being. Accordingly, Nishida did not clarify the ways in which we are historically and factically contingent. But this shortcoming of chorological reflection in the late 1920s was not so much an issue of chorological reflection itself. Insofar as it is a kind of hermeneutic reflection that discloses and awakens to one's situated place, it was more a matter of time before Nishida developed chorological reflection to encompass our social and historical engagements, as he did in the 1930s and '40s.

As our discussion has shown, both Heidegger and Nishida paid heed to the disclosedness and situatedness of our being. The basic insight at work in the two thinkers is the idea that we are not "subjects" with an internal realm that reaches out to "objects" in the external realm. For Heidegger, Dasein's understanding of being is essentially characterized by the disclosedness of its being to the world. For Nishida, too, disclosedness to one's place is constitutive of *jikaku*. Consequently, both hermeneutic and chorological reflection take as their starting point our essential openness to the world. However, Heidegger still saw the transcendental priority of Dasein over the world. Consequently, hermeneutic reflection in BT revealed Dasein's being as world-disclosing. At this point, we can recall how Nishida criticized Heidegger's understanding of being as an "insufficient *jikaku*" insofar as it does not clarify the deeper level of self-awareness, namely absolute nothingness. Nishida was certainly right that Heidegger's hermeneutic reflection did not delve deep enough. From Nishida's perspective, it must reveal the pre-reflective origin of transcendental reflection not in the pre-ontological understanding of Dasein but in the non-reflective experience completely devoid of the subject-object split. As Ueda argues: "[s]ince Dasein is being-in-the-world, [...] Dasein must also be understood from the direction of the world, or the self from the direction of *basho*."⁹³ Chorological reflection, then, radicalizes transcendental reflection by disclosing its pre-reflective origin in the selfless experience of absolute nothingness. Consequently, chorological reflection ultimately becomes the reflection of the place within itself. And here lies the true radicalness of Nishida's chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy, which Heidegger's hermeneutic transformation failed to see. When one follows through with chorological reflection and becomes

⁹³ Ibid., p. 348.

disclosed to “reality” realizing itself, one finds oneself *as the reflection of absolute nothingness, i.e as the place of absolute no-thingness wherein “reality” realizes itself*. Therefore, if Heidegger’s hermeneutic transformation of transcendental philosophy was ultimately the result of the acknowledgement of the *facticity of our being*, Nishida’s chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy was the result of the acknowledgement of the *absolute no-thingness of our being*.

Conclusion: Possibilities of transcendental philosophy

As stated in the Introduction, comparative studies of Heidegger and Nishida have focused on juxtaposing Nishida's philosophy with the later Heidegger's thought after the turn. The present study was an attempt to shed light on the further common ground between the two thinkers, namely their earlier critical engagements with transcendental philosophy. In the late 1920s, both Heidegger and Nishida believed in the *possibilities* of transcendental philosophy, namely that it *could* clear the way towards overcoming the Western metaphysical tradition if it were transformed. By way of conclusion, then, let us recapitulate our findings by addressing how their hermeneutic and chorological transformations shed light on the possibilities of transcendental philosophy.

The three main motifs of transcendental philosophy are: (1) transcendental foundationalism, (2) transcendental reflection, and (3) an alteration of our relation to the world from naively believing in its independent existence to seeing it through transcendental subjectivity. Both Heidegger and Nishida saw the importance of seeking a kind of transcendental foundation. For Heidegger, the hermeneutic priority of Dasein was understood in terms of transcendental priority. Much like the way transcendental subjectivity constitutes the world, Dasein's being discloses the being of the world. But the hermeneutic-transcendental priority of Dasein clarifies how Dasein's relation to the world is primarily not that of a subject transcending towards objects but that of disclosedness to the world. This is why the world is one of the constitutive structures of Dasein's being: Dasein *is* being-in-the-world. Therefore, while it has transcendental priority over the world, at the same time, Dasein cannot *be* without the world. In this way, Heidegger sheds light on the essential disclosedness and situatedness of transcendental subjectivity.

Nishida, too, understood transcendental subjectivity as essentially disclosed to and situated in one's place. But, for Nishida, this disclosedness was understood in terms of self-negation. The self is disclosed to one's place by negating the self, i.e. by making room for things to manifest. And when one completely negates oneself, the subject-object distinction collapses. Amidst the complete absorption in the flow of music, there is neither I as subject nor music as object. "I" become the place of absolute nothingness wherein "music" realizes itself. Accordingly, for Nishida, the transcendental foundation was ultimately sought in the place of absolute nothingness. Unlike Heidegger's Dasein, this did not entail the kind of transcendental priority we find in Husserl and Kant. For, at the level of absolute nothingness, there is no "seer." There is merely "seeing without the seer." Accordingly, absolute nothingness is no "subjectivity" that "constitutes" objects but, rather, it is the place of absolute no-thingness wherein "reality" realizes itself. Put differently, there is absolutely no-thing that can be said to constitute objects. There is

neither subject nor object. In this way, Nishida's identification of the transcendental ground in absolute nothingness challenges the idea that this ground ("subjectivity") is at all positable. Transcendental "subjectivity" (if we are to still call it that) determines "reality" (or "objects") through complete self-negation.

Both Heidegger and Nishida agree that a transcendental ground must be sought by a kind of second-order reflection into the conditions of possibility for our experience. Such transcendental reflection must be distinguished from first-order reflection, which thematizes objects to determine their real properties. Heidegger's hermeneutic reflection, however, renders transcendental reflection a matter of disclosing and awakening to the contingent nature of one's own factual situation. Accordingly, transcendental reflection does not abstract from our everyday way of being in the world. Rather, it discloses the transcendental constitution of oneself in one's situatedness. Transcendental philosophy can and must begin with and return to our facticity and historicity.

Insofar as Nishida's chorological reflection, too, is a kind of hermeneutic reflection, it also sheds light on the importance of facticity and historicity in transcendental philosophy. But Nishida's chorological reflection, at least during the late 1920s, was less focused on this aspect and more geared towards the soteriological concern of self-awakening. It thus renders transcendental reflection a matter of disclosing oneself through self-negation and awakening to one's absolute no-thingness. Transcendental reflection can and must begin with the facticity and historicity of Dasein's being, but it must not end there. It must delve deeper and reveal the absolute no-thingness of our being.

Certainly, for both Heidegger and Nishida, the alteration of our relation to the world is essential for transcendental philosophy. Indeed, we can even say that the metaphysical implications of transcendental inquiry are where we find the most important "possibilities" of transcendental philosophy in the sense of what they could achieve. This is so because, for both, transcendental inquiry is essentially a matter of becoming wakeful to one's situation. For Heidegger, this calls for an existentialist awakening. Ultimately, one should seize the existentiell possibility of authentic self-understanding in one's own existence. For Nishida, this calls for a soteriological self-awakening. One should practice self-negation such that, at some point, one may realize the absolute no-thingness of one's own being. But the way we come to see the world upon this awakening is radically different for the two thinkers. According to Heidegger, transcendental philosophy challenges our naive realist view and instead, we come to see the world through transcendental subjectivity (Dasein), one whose ontological constitution is articulated as disclosedness to the world, factual, and is always already projecting its possibilities upon the world. We come to see the world through Dasein's being-in-the-world.

For Nishida, the outlook is very different. Transcendental philosophy certainly challenges naive realism, but it does not replace this with transcendental idealism, even when the ontological constitution of transcendental subjectivity is understood as being-in-the-world. Transcendental philosophy allows us to come to see the world *through absolute no-thingness*. This is not at all equivalent to saying that we come to see the world *as absolutely nothing* as if to imply a nihilistic position. Rather, we come to the self-realization that “I” am the place of absolute no-thingness wherein “reality” realizes itself. In other words, “I” come to see the direct experience of “reality” prior to the subject-object duality. From Nishida’s standpoint, then, the important possibility of transcendental philosophy is that it can and must transform our relation to the world from seeing the world as objects existing independently of us to understanding (and ideally appropriating) the self-realization of the “world.” The most enigmatic aspect of Nishida’s chorological transformation of transcendental philosophy, then, is that transcendental *reflection* brings us back in touch with the *non-reflective* experience prior to the subject-object split.

Lastly, let us draw out the stages of transcendental philosophy in order of the radicalness of their transformations. Namely, transcendental philosophy alters our relation to the world from seeing the world as existing independently of us (naive realism) to:

- (i) Seeing the world through transcendental consciousness (Kant and Husserl’s transcendental idealism),
- (ii) Seeing the world through Dasein’s being-in-the-world (Heidegger’s transcendental-hermeneutic idealism), and
- (iii) Seeing the world through absolute no-thingness (Nishida’s awakened realism).

It remains an interesting question how and why the later Heidegger and Nishida would come to the understanding that the possibilities of transcendental philosophy they sought during this period in fact indicated its limitations.

Glossary of Key Japanese Terms

basho 場所: place
basho no ronri 場所の論理: logic of *basho*
bashoron 場所論: theory of *basho*
bashoteki gentei 場所的限定: determination of place, placial determination
bashoteki ronri 場所的論理: logic of *basho*, placial logic
chōetsuteki jutsugomen 超越的述語面: transcendent predicate plane
chōetsuteki shugomen 超越的主語面: transcendent subject plane
chokkan 直感: intuition
chūshōteki ippansha 抽象的一般者: abstract universal
eichiteki ippansha 叡知的一般者: intelligible universal
gutaiteki ippansha 具体的一般者: concrete universal
handanteki ippansha 判断的一般者: judging universal, universal of judgments
hansei 反省: reflection
ippansha 一般者: universal
ippansha no jikakuteki gentei 一般者の自覚的限定: self-aware determination of the universal
ippansha no jikogentei 一般者の自己限定: self-determination of the universal
ishiki 意識: consciousness
jikaku 自覚: self-awareness
jikakuteki gentei 自覚的限定: self-aware determination
jikakuteki ippansha 自覚的一般者: self-aware universal, universal of self-awareness
junsui keiken 純粹經驗: pure experience
jutsugo 述語: predicate
kyakkan 客觀: object
mu no basho 無の場所: the place of nothingness
noesisteki chōetsu ノエシスの超越: noetic transcendence
oitearu basho 於いてある場所: the place of implacement
oitearu mono 於いてあるもの: that which is in the place, the implaced
shugo 主語: grammatical subject
shukan 主觀: subject, subjectivity
tachiba 立場: standpoint
u no basho 有の場所: the place of being(s)
utsusu 写す, 映す: to mirror, to reflect
zettai mu no basho 絶対無の場所: the place of absolute nothingness

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